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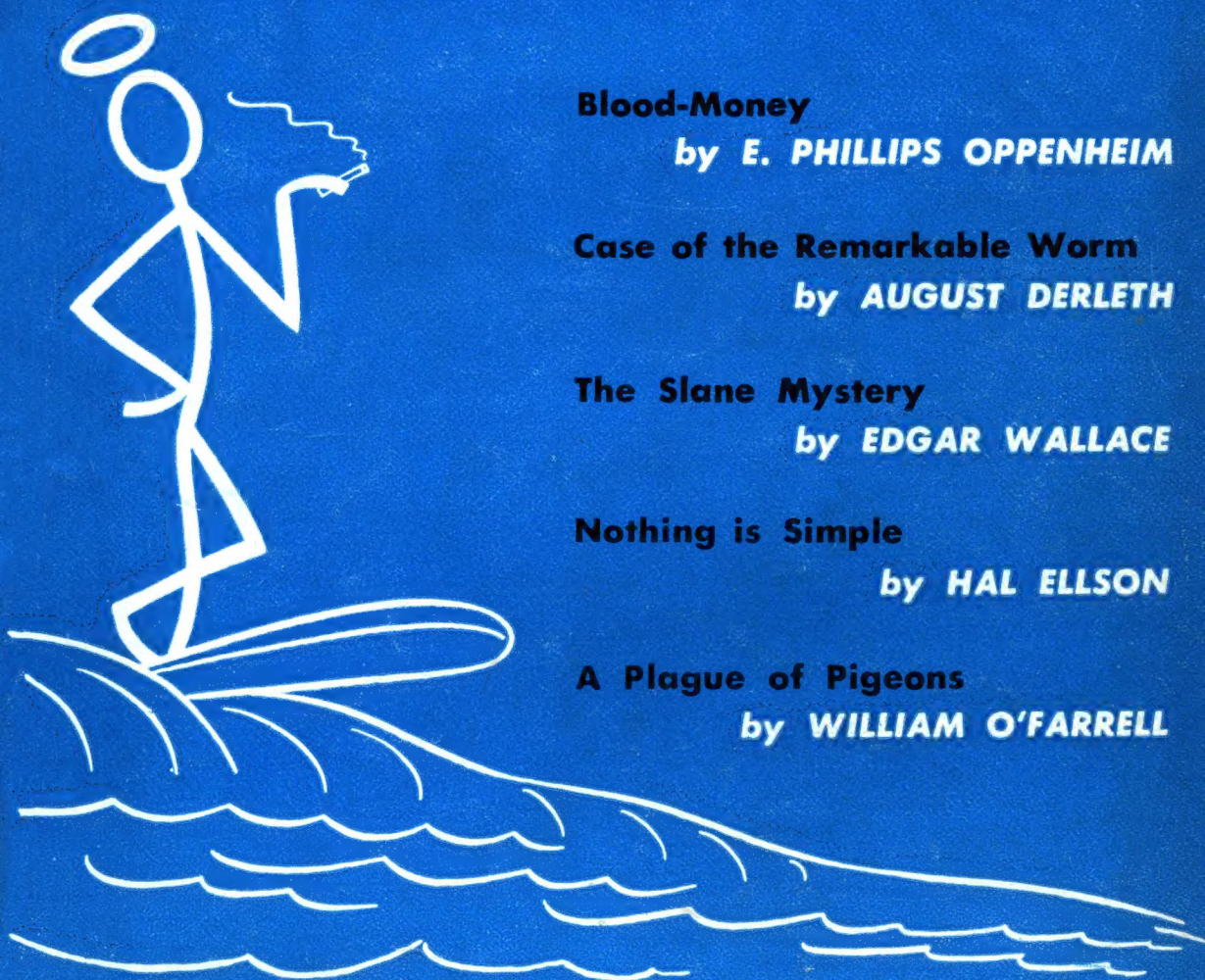
THE saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS



Blood-Money
by E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Case of the Remarkable Worm
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The Slane Mystery
by EDGAR WALLACE

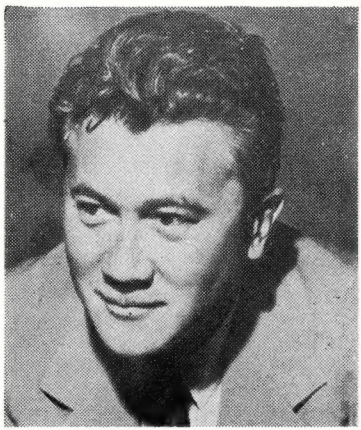
Nothing is Simple
by HAL ELLSON

A Plague of Pigeons
by WILLIAM O'FARRELL

The Ugly Impresario

A NEW SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION



John Masters, a top-notch spinner of yarns, of which the best-known may be *Bhowani Junction*, spent his first 14 years of adult life as a professional soldier, and won a DSO for his part in the suicide-squad Chindit operation in Burma during the last war. He must therefore be acknowledged to know what he is talking about when he speaks about heroes and adventurers.

In a recent interview by Kenneth Allsop in the London *Daily Mail*, he was quoted as saying:

"What must be faced is that the soldier who gallantly rescues a comrade under scything enemy fire may also have kicked his grandmother in the teeth on occasion.

"The intrepid explorer may welsh on his debts. The fearless fighter pilot may also be a lecher systematically deceiving his wife. A VC of the last war, whom I have known all my life, is a homosexual.

"The truth that a stiff-upper-lip chap can be both saint and sinner has been left out of the adventure novel. Even as a boy devouring Buchan and Ian Hay and Bulldog Drummond, I felt there was something wrong about the heroes who were inexorably pure and honorable, always kind to their mothers, monotonously saving dogs from drowning. I didn't understand what dissatisfied me, what was lacking, until I came upon Forester and that very complex character Horatio Hornblower.

"The bulldog hero is shown as always heroic. Other facets are ignored — that a hero has weaknesses and worries, that he is often frightened, selfish, full of self-doubt."

Having devoted all my own literary life to the chronicles of a hero of the almost-perfect type (except for a certain light-hearted attitude towards larceny when committed by himself) this came as quite a jolt to my self-satisfaction.

I refuse to take it as an open indorsement of the louts whom certain writers have tried to glorify, who spend much more time kicking women in the teeth than being heroic. But I'm afraid it will keep coming back to my mind from now on, whenever I catch the Saint being too frightfully brave and noble.

Leslie Charteris

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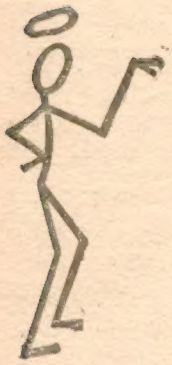
AUGUST 1962
VOL. 17, NO. 2



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THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE, August 1962, Vol. 17, No. 2. Published monthly by FICTION PUBLISHING COMPANY, 30 East 42nd Street, New York 17, New York, by arrangement with Saint Magazines, Inc. Office of the editor—489 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, New York. Single copy price, 35¢. Subscriptions in U. S. A. and Canada, $4.00 per year. Subscription in foreign countries, $5.00 per year. Names of people and places are fictitious and any use of the name of an actual person or place is purely coincidental.
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the ugly impresario

by . . . Leslie Charteris

Sir Jasper was a rare and remarkable specimen — unfortunately for him . . .

"THAT," observed Simon Templar, "is quite a sight, even for these parts."

"And that," said Maureen Herald, "is what I've got to talk to."

They lay on the dazzling sands of Pampelonne, which are the beaches of St. Tropez, gazing out at the sun-drenched Mediterranean where a few white-sailed skiffs criss-crossed on lazy tacks, an assortment of speedboats with water-skiers in tow traced evanescent arabesques among them, and, much closer in, the object of Simon's comment cruised southwards along the shore line where its occupants could comfortably observe and be observed by the heliophiles on the strand.

It was an open Chris-Craft runabout which would have photographed exactly like any other similarly expensive standard model, except in color. The color was a brilliant purple which no shipyard can ever have been asked to apply to a hull before. And to offset it, the upholstery of the cockpit and the lounging pad covering the engine hatch were an equally brilliant orange. As an aid to identifying the owner of this chromatic mon-

AT ST. TROPEZ, THE MEDITERRANEAN PLAYGROUND OF PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERS, SIMON TEMPLAR TACKLES A MYSTERY TO WHICH HE HIMSELF IS A PARTIAL WITNESS

strosity, the sides of the craft were emblazoned with a large capital J nestling inside a still larger capital U, the monogram being surrounded by a circle of large golden metal stars.

The owner of the boat and the initials, Sir Jasper Undine himself, sat on the port gunwhale controlling the course with one hand. Apparently to insure that he would not be eclipsed by his own setting, he wore fluorescent green shorts, a baggy fluorescent crimson windbreaker, and a long-peaked fluorescent yellow cap. Under its exaggerated eye-shade he wore a pair of huge white-plastic blue-lensed sunglasses which, with the help of a torpedo-sized cigar clamped in his mouth and the gray goatee below it, balked any analysis of his features even at that comparatively short range: one had mainly the impression of some goggle-eyed, balloon-torsoed, spindle-legged visitor from Outer Space which had arrayed itself in human garments selected to conform with the prismatic prejudices of Alpha Centauri. But no one who paid any attention to the sophisticated chatter of those times would have been so misled as to fail to identify Sir Jasper Undine, whose ostentatious eccentricities (suitably embroidered and broadcast by a tireless press agent) had established him as the most garish current character in a coterie which has seldom been distinguished by coyness and self-effacement.

Sir Jasper Undine was, in fact, at that moment one of the indisputable kingpins of the entertainment world in Europe. The story of his rise from part-time usher in a run-down movie theater in South London, to his present control of a complex of motion picture and television producing and distributing companies with ramifications in five countries, in versions flattering or calumnious according to their source, has been told too often to need repeating here. It certainly vouched for an outstanding talent; although some stuffy critics might say that this leaned more towards a ruthless dexterity at brain-picking, idea-stealing, cheating, finagling, and double-dealing, than to any creative or artistic ability. But having achieved success, he had made a second career of indulging every appetite it would gratify, up to and including the knighthood which had cost him many expensive contributions to good causes with which he had no sympathy.

"Is he really as horrible as one would think?" Simon asked.

"Even worse, I believe. But he's got the final say-so on a job that I need very much."

"Don't you have an agent to handle things like that?"

"Of course. My agent's got everything on the contract except Undine's signature. And Undine won't

make up his mind about that without meeting me himself."

Maureen Herald was an actress. She had entered Simon's life with a letter from David Lewin of the *Daily Express:*

Dear Saint,

Enclosed please find Maureen Herald. I don't need to tell you who she is, but I can tell you that I wish everyone I know in show business was as nice a person. She has to go to St. Tropez to talk to someone who is not so nice. She doesn't know anyone else there, and she can't go places alone, and she may well want a change of company. I've told her that you also are a good friend and comparatively nice and can behave yourself if you have to. No wonder some people think I'm crazy.

She had gray eyes and what he could only have described as hair-colored hair, something between brown and black with natural variations of shading that had not been submerged by the artificial uniformity of a rinse. It was a perfect complement to her rather thin patrician features, which would only have been hardened by any obvious embellishments. She had a gracefully lean-moulded figure to match, interestingly feminine but without the exaggerated curvature in the balcony which most of the reigning royalty of her profession found it necessary to possess or simulate. His first guess would have been that she had started out as a high fashion model, but he learned that in fact she had been a nurse at the Hollywood Hospital when a famous director was brought in for treatment of an acute ulcer and offered her a screen test before he left. Her rise to stardom had been swift and outwardly effortless.

"But my last two pictures were commercial flops," she told Simon candidly. "I say they were stinkers, of course, but some other people found it easier to blame it on me. A nice girl, they said, but death at the box office. And just when my first contract had run out—it was no star salary to start with—and I should have been able to ask for some real money. They just aren't bidding for me in Hollywood at the moment, and if I don't do something soon I could be washed up for good."

"That would be a pity," he said. "And nothing but a few annuities to live on."

"That isn't even half funny," she retorted. "After taxes and clothes and publicity and all the other expenses you have to go for, there's very little left out of what I took home. And I've got a mother in a sanitarium with TB and a kid brother just starting medical school. I can't afford not to get this part."

The purple speedboat veered closer to the shore, farther along. There was another man in the

cockpit, but he had hardly been noticeable as he sat down: even though he had ginger hair and a complexion exactly the tint of a boiled *langouste,* they could not compete with the gaudy coloration surrounding him. Now he got up and began throwing out water skis and a tow-rope. He was short and scrawny, and his torso was fish-white up to where his narrow shoulders turned the same painful pink as his face.

Three girls had come down to the water's edge nearest the boat, shouting and giggling. They had almost identical slim but bubble-bosomed figures displayed by the uttermost minimum of bikini. One was raven-haired and the two others were platinum-bleached. One of the blondes began to put on the skis while the other two girls waded out to the boat and climbed in.

"Sir Jasper seems to be casting starlets too, if I recognize the types," Simon remarked. "And he doesn't seem to have much difficulty picking them up."

"When I phoned him this morning for an appointment he said he'd be busy all day until cocktail time."

"He probably figures it's good psychology to keep you cooling your heels for a while. And after all, he *is* busy."

"From what I've heard, next to making money that's his favorite business."

The Saint recalled photos that he had seen published of Sir Jasper Undine in various night clubs and casinos, where he was always accompanied by at least one conspicuously glamorous damsel and frequently two or three. It was also common gossip that he did not merely cultivate the impression that he lived like a sultan but aspired to substantiate it.

"I wonder if I could resist the temptation, if I were in his position."

"You've probably had plenty of practice resisting temptations," Miss Herald said. "But I'm not looking forward to this interview."

The two dolls who were riding deployed themselves artistically on the orange coverings, the red-haired factotum scrambled down again into insignificance, the Chris-Craft's sulky muttering rose to a hearty roar, the tow-rope tightened, and the skier came up out of the water a little wobbly at first and then steadying and straightening up and skimming out of the wake as the boat came to planing speed.

Undine drove at full throttle, curling across the bay on a course that seemed coldbloodedly improvised to score as many near-misses as possible on all the pedalos, floaters, dinghies, and other slower vessels in the area.

"Do you water-ski?" Simon asked, as they watched.

"I've tried it. But I don't much like being whipped around like the tail of a kite, wherever the boat

takes you. If someone would invent a way of steering the boat yourself while you're skiing, it might be fun."

"Water-skiers must be the worst kind of exhibitionists. Haven't you noticed that their whole fun is in showing off? If they just enjoyed water-skiing for its own sake, they could do it all over the ocean without bothering anyone. But no. They always have to work as close as they can to what they hope is an admiring audience, and half-swamp anyone who's only trying to have a quiet peaceful time on the water."

"But the girl who's skiing isn't doing that," Maureen pointed out. "It's Undine who's driving."

"Using her to get more attention." The skier fell off then, trying to jump the wake, and Simon sat up with a short laugh. "What a pity that wasn't him! But I'm sure he wouldn't ski himself and risk anything so undignified . . . Come on, let's forget him for a while and have a dunk."

She swam well and with surprising endurance for her slight build, not with the brief burst of speed fizzling out into breathlessness that he would have expected. He followed her for about five hundred yards, and when they turned around she semed quite capable of making it five kilometers.

"I won all the athletic prizes in school," she said when he complimented her. "That's probably my trouble, being the good sister instead of the home-wrecker type."

"If I treat you like a brother," he said, "it's only because David stuck me with it."

After the sun had dried them again she said: "I don't want to spoil your day, but I'm not tanned like you are, and it might ruin everything if I meet Undine this evening looking like a raspberry sundae."

"It's lunch-time, anyway. I have an idea. Let's drive up to Ramatuelle. There's a little restaurant there, Chez Cauvière, where they make the best *paella* this side of the Pyrenees and perhaps the other side too. Then I'll take you back to the hotel for a siesta, and by seven o'clock you'll feel fit to cope with a carload of Undines—if you can stand the thought."

The ambrosial hodge-podge of lobster, chicken, octopus, vegetables, and saffron-tinted rice was as good as he boasted; the unlabelled *rosé* of the house was cool insidious nectar; and by the end of the meal they were almost old friends. He felt an almost genuinely brotherly concern when he left her and had to remember that all this had been only an interlude.

"Is there anything else I can do?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "I've been thinking about it. Do you suppose you could come by the café about eight o'clock, and say hullo to me? Then if it seems like a good idea by that time I can make like we had a date.

It might get me out of something. Even just as a card up my sleeve, it'd do a lot for my morale. That is, if you aren't already tied up—"

"I can't think of anything better," he smiled. "You can count on me."

She had already told him which café was referred to. The quais which face the harbor of St. Tropez are lined almost solidly with restaurants and cafés, where everyone who knows the routine turns out in the evening to be seen and to see who else is being seen; but ever since "Saint-Trop" became known as the rendezvous of a certain artistic-bohemian set for whom the Riviera westward from Cannes was either too princely or too bourgeois, "the" café has always been the Sénéquier, and the others have to be content with its overflow—which is usually enough to swamp them anyway. Although many of the original celebrities have since migrated to less publicized havens, the invading sightseers who put them to flight continue to swarm there and stare hopefully around, most of the time at each other. But even in this era a permanently reserved table at Sénéquier was still a status symbol which Sir Jasper Undine would inevitably have had to display, whatever the price.

Simon strolled slowly along the Quai Jean-Jaurès a little before eight, allowing himself a leisured study of the scene as he approached.

It was impossible not to spot Undine at any distance: he stood out even amidst the rainbow patchwork of holiday garb on the terrace with the help of a blazer with broad black and yellow horizontal stripes, which with the help of his oversized sun glasses made him look something like a large bumblebee in a field of butterflies—if you could imagine a bumblebee wearing a red and white checkered tam-o'-shanter.

Besides the ginger-haired young man who had served as mate on the speedboat in the morning, and two of the shapely playthings they had picked up (or two almost indistinguishable chippies off the same block), Sir Jasper's entourage had been augmented not only by Maureen Herald, who had been privileged to sit on one side of him, but also by a reddish-blonde young woman with a voluptuous authority that made the starlet types look adolescent. As he came closer, Simon recognized the sulky sensual face as that of Dominique Rousse, a French actress whose eminence, some competitors asserted, was based mainly on certain prominences, which contrived to get uncovered in all her pictures on one pretext or another. On her other side was a black-browed heavy-set individual who seemed to be watching and absorbing everything with brooding intensity but to be deliberately withholding any contribution of his own.

As Simon came within earshot,

Undine was saying: ". . . and rub his nose in it. The banks don't make any loans on artistic integrity, and a producer who isn't as tough as a bank better learn to print his own money. I know what I can do for anyone and I figure what they've got to do for me to pull their weight in the package, or I'm not interested—"

He broke off, cigar and goatee cocked challengingly, as the Saint stopped at the table.

Maureen Herald's face lighted up momentarily, and then masked itself with a kind of cordial restraint.

"Oh, hullo, Simon," she said, and turned smoothly to the others. "This is Mr—Thomas." The hesitation was barely perceptible. "Sir Jasper Undine. Mr & Mrs Carozza —that is, Dominique Rousse." The dark withdrawn man, then, was the lush actress's husband. "I'm afraid I didn't get all the other names—"

Undine did not bother to supply them. He stared at the Saint steadily. The impenetrable sun-glasses hid his eyes, but at this range it could be seen that his nose was fleshy and his mouth large-lipped and moist.

He asked brusquely: "Any relation of the Thomas brothers—Ralph and Gerald—the directors?"

"No," said the Saint pleasantly.

"Not an actor?"

"No."

"You can sit down, then. Get him a chair, Wilbert."

The carroty young man gave up his own seat and went looking for another. He was the only customer in the place who was wearing a tie, and even a shiny serge jacket as well. They were like symbols of servitude amid the surrounding riot of casual garb, and obviously defined his part in Undine's retinue.

"There's nothing wrong with actors except when they're trying to get a job, and then there's a limit to how many you can 'ave around at the same time," said Sir Jasper. His origins revealed themselves in his speech more consistently through its intonation and subject matter than by the dropping of *H*'s, which he did only occasionally. "One day somebody'll make a robot that you just wind up and it says what you put on a tape, and then they can all butter themselves. Get him a drink, Wilbert."

"And who would make the tape recording?" Simon inquired mildly.

"The writers would be glad to do that themselves. They always know 'ow their precious lines ought to be spoken better than anybody else —don't they, Lee?"

The taciturn Carozza, whose profession was thus revealed, gave a tight-lipped smile without answering. Now the Saint remembered having seen his name in print as one of Europe's *avant-garde* new dramatists, but was vague about his actual achievements. It was not a sphere in which Simon Templar had more than a superficial interest.

"These brainy chaps can do any-

thing," Undine pursued. "Look at him. There's Dominique, who gets made love to by all the matinée idols—on the set, of course—and papers her bathroom with mash notes from millionaires, and I could go for her myself, but she falls for his intellectual act. He's hired to work on my script, and she wants to play the lead in it, but *he* goes and marries her. That's what you do with brains."

"You promised me the part before that," said Dominique Rousse sullenly.

"I said you were the best bet I'd seen. But what am I betting on now? All you'll be thinking about is what Lee wants, not what I want. I'm kidding, of course."

If he was, it was with a touch that tickled like a club.

"Does that mean you were kidding when you asked me to come here for an interview?" Maureen Herald asked.

"Get me another cigar, Wilbert." Undine brought his opaque gaze back to her. "Listen, you remember in 'Ollywood about six years ago, right after the premeer of your first picture, which I saw—I was giving a party, and I sent you an invitation, but you didn't come then."

"I'd never met you, and I happened to have another date."

"I knew it couldn't 've been because you felt too grand for the likes of me. After all, you came all the way here this time, didn't you?"

"So all this was just your way of getting even?" she asked steadily.

"Now why would I go to all that trouble? I'm reminding you, that's all. I didn't let it make any difference when I told my lawyers to go ahead and draw up a contract with everything your agent was able to get out of me. I rang 'em up this afternoon and they said they'd already sent it off. It should be here in the first post tomorrow. Then all I got to do is make up my mind to be big-'earted and sign it."

"But if—"

"Who said you and Dominique couldn't *both* be starred? There's two female parts in the script that could be built up equal, if we can stop Lee trying to give all the best of it to his wife."

"I'm sorry," Carozza said, speaking at last. "But I don't see that." He had only a trace of accent, which was as much Oxford as Latin. "Unless Messalina dominates everything—"

Sir Jasper clutched his temples.

"There 'e goes. Just like I told you." He turned to Maureen again, and dropped a heavy hand on her knee. "But don't worry—he'll come 'round when he thinks about all that lolly I could stop paying him every week. So let's you and me go to dinner and talk about this part." He stood up, royally. "Wilbert, order one more round and pay the bill. So long, everybody."

Simon met Maureen's eyes as they looked at him, letting her take the cue, and they said as plainly as

if she had spoken: "Forgive me, but I guess I *am* stuck with it. What else can I do?"

The Saint smiled his understanding, and said: "I'll call you tomorrow."

He accepted another Peter Dawson without compunction, and made it a double just to reciprocate the courtesy with which it had been offered. The Carozzas also shrugged-nodded acceptance; but the two starlet types, after ogling the Saint speculatively and receiving little encouragement, twittered obliquely to each other and took their leave.

While Wilbert (whether that was his first or his last name, it fitted his function and personality like a glove) was twisting one way and another trying to flag down a waiter, Dominique Rousse exploded in a furious aside to her husband which was pitched too low for any other ear; but Carozza silenced her with a warning down-drift of his brows. He was studying the Saint now with the undeviating concentration which he seemed to aim at its objects like a gun.

"Did I hear Miss Herald say you were Mr Simon Thomas?" he inquired.

"You did," Simon replied easily.

"I was wondering if it should have been Simon Templar."

"Why?"

"You have a great resemblance to a picture I saw once—of a person who is called the Saint."

"Have I?"

"I think you are being modest."

The Saint grinned at him blandly and indulgently, and drawled: "I hope that's a compliment."

The ginger-haired Wilbert had finally accomplished his assignment, which had kept him out of this exchange, and now as if he had not heard any of it he pulled a notebook and a ball-point pen from his pocket and leaned towards the Saint like a college-magazine reporter.

"What hotel are you staying at, Mr Thomas?"

"I'm staying in a friend's apartment. He lent it to me while he's away."

"Would you give me the address? And the telephone number, if there is one?"

The Saint was mildly surprised.

"What ever for?"

"Sir Jasper will expect me to know," Wilbert said. "If he wanted to get in touch with you again for any reason, and I didn't know where to find you, he'd skin me alive."

With his jug-handle ears and slightly protruding eyes and teeth, and the complexion that looked as if it had been sandpapered, he was so pathetically earnest, like a boy scout trying for a badge, that Simon didn't have the heart to be evasive with that information. But in return he asked where Undine was staying.

"He has a villa for the season—*Les Cigales*," Wilbert told him.

"You take the Avenue Foch out of the town, and it's three or four kilometers out, on your left, right on the water. Sir Jasper has had signs posted along the road with his initials, so you won't have any trouble finding it if he invites you there."

"Thanks," murmured the Saint. "But I hardly think we've struck up that kind of friendship."

Carozza was still scrutinizing him with unalleviated curiosity; and to head off any further interrogation, Simon deliberately took the lead in another direction.

"What is this epic you're working on?" he asked.

"Messalina," Carozza said curtly. He was plainly irritated at being forced off at a tangent from the subject that intrigued him.

"Based on the dear old Roman mama of the same name?"

"Yes."

"I can see why it would be difficult to build up another female part and make it as important as hers."

"With any historical truth or dramatic integrity, yes. But those are never Sir Jasper's first considerations."

"His first being the box office?"

"Usually. And after that, his personal reasons."

"This Maureen Herald," Dominique Rousse said. "She is a good friend of you?"

In French, the words "good friend" applied to one of the opposite sex have a possible delicate ambiguity which Simon did not overlook.

"I only met her yesterday," he answered. "But I think she's very nice."

"Do you want her to have this part?"

"I wish her luck, but I don't wish anyone else any bad luck," said the Saint diplomatically. "I hope it all works out so that everybody's happy."

He mentally excluded Sir Jasper Undine from that general benevolence, but decided not to bring up that issue. He could see that Lee Carozza was getting set to resume his inquisition, and he was instinctively disinclined to remain available for it. He finished his drink and stood up briskly.

"Well, it was nice meeting all of you, but I must be going. Maybe I'll see you around."

Because Undine had turned to the right when he left, Simon turned the other way, to obviate any risk of running into them again and seeming to have followed. In the direction thus imposed on him, opening off a narrow and unpromising alley, was the surprisingly atmospheric and attractive patio of the Auberge des Maures, which it was no hardship to settle for. He found a table in a quiet corner; and presently over a splendid bouillabaisse and a bottle of cool rosé he found himself inevitably considering the phenomenon of Sir Jasper Undine.

It was a frustrating kind of review, because in spite of Undine's resplendent qualifications as a person on whom something unpleasant ought to be inflicted, the appropriate form of visitation was not at all easy to determine.

A simple extermination was naturally the most complete and tempting prescription, but might have seemed a bit drastic to a jury of tender hearts.

At the other end of the scale, a financial penalty, levied by such straightforward means as burglary, was not likely to be practically productive. Sir Jasper, for all his ostentation, would not be packing a load of jewels like his female equivalent would have: and in a rented villa he would not have any other personal treasures. Nor was there much chance of finding a lot of cash on the premises or on Sir Jasper's person. Wilbert had paid for the drinks from a modest wallet and entered the amount in his notebook: it was evident that among his various duties was that of personal paymaster, and he was the prim and prudent type who would be certain to keep most of the funds in the form of travellers' checks.

The only possibility in between would be one of those elaborately plotted and engineered swindles which delighted the Saint's artistic soul, but for which none of the elements of the situation seemed to offer a readymade springboard.

It was quite a problem for a buccaneer with a proper sense of responsibility to his life's mission, and Simon Templar was not much closer to a solution when he walked back to his temporary home at what for St. Tropez was a comparatively rectangular hour of the night, having decided that some new factor might have to be added before an inspiration would get off the ground.

He was at the entrance when the door of one of the parked cars in the driveway opened, and quick footsteps sounded behind him, and a woman said: *"Pardon,* Monsieur Templar—"

The voice was halfway familiar, enough to make him turn unguardedly before he fully recognized it, and then he also recognized Dominique Rousse and it was too late.

She smiled.

"So my husband was right," she said. "You are *le Saint.*"

"He wins the bet," Simon said resignedly. "Is he here?"

"No. He is at the Casino. He will be there until dawn. For him, gambling is a passion. I told him I had a headache and could not stand any more. Do you have an aspirin?"

The Saint contemplated her amiably for a profound moment.

"I'll see if I can find one."

He took her up in the self-service elevator, sat her down in the living room, and went foraging. He came back with Old Curio, ice cubes, water, and two tablets which

he punctiliously placed beside the glass he mixed for her.

She laughed with a sudden abandon which shattered the unreal sultriness of her face.

"You are wonderful."

"I only try to oblige."

"You make this much easier for me. You know that I want something more—"

"More difficult?"

"Much more. I want to be Messalina in this film of Undine. It is the most important thing in the world."

His eyebrows slanted banteringly.

"That's a considerable statement."

"It is important to me. I am a star in Europe, yes. In England and America they have heard of me—they have seen pictures in special theaters, with subtitles or with another voice speaking for me—but I am not a star. To become a star internationally, to be paid the biggest money, I must be seen in a great picture made in English. All of us have to do this, like Lollobrigida and Loren and Bardot. Undine will make that kind of picture."

Simon swirled the amber liquid in his glass gently around the floes.

"You know I just met him for the first time. What makes you think I can influence him?"

"Perhaps you can influence Maureen Herald to look for another job."

"I'm quite sure she wouldn't listen to me. And why should she?"

"I must tell you something," she said with restrained vehemence. "I already have a contract to play Messalina. It was not spoken of this evening because it is still a secret between Undine and me. But I made him sign it before I would pay the price that he wanted." She stated it with such brutal directness that the Saint blinked. "He cannot get out of that. But if he is thinking of cheating by having another part made just as big, or bigger, I would like to see him killed."

"And have no picture at all?"

"There would still be a picture. The contract is with his company. They already have much money invested. The company would go on, but the producer would not have Undine telling him how he must change the script." She stood up, and came close. "If you can do nothing else, kill Undine for me."

He stared at her. Her arms went up, and her hands linked behind his neck, her eyes half closed and her mouth half open.

"I would be very grateful," she said.

"I'm sure you would," he said as lightly as possible. "And if the *flics* didn't pin it on me, your husband would only shoot me and get acquitted."

"Who would tell him? It is for his good, too, and what he does not know will not hurt him, any more than what I had to do before with Undine."

Simon realized, almost against credibility, that she was perfectly sober and completely serious. It was one of the most stunning revelations of total amorality that even he had ever encountered—and ethical revulsion made it no easier to forget that it came with the bait of a face and body that might have bothered even St Anthony.

He let his head be drawn down until their lips met and clung and then as he responded more experimentally she drew back.

"You will do it?"

The Saint had reached an age when it seemed only common sense to avoid gratuitously tangling with the kind of woman which hell hath no fury like, but he never lied if he could avoid it.

"I'll think about it," he said truthfully.

"Do not think too long," she said. "You would do it cleverly; but another person could also do it, not so cleverly, but to be acquitted. Only then I would not owe you anything."

"You aren't offering a down payment?" he said with a shade of mockery.

"No. But I am not like Undine. I would not cheat in that way."

She looked searchingly into his eyes for some seconds longer, but the pouting mask of her beauty gave no hint of whatever she thought she found. Then abruptly she turned and walked to the door. Before he could be quite sure of her intention, she had opened it without a pause and gone out; it closed behind her, and the click of her heels went away uninterruptedly down the stone hall and ended in the metallic rattle of the elevator gate.

The Saint took a long slow breath and passed the back of a hand across his forehead.

Then he picked up his glass again and emptied it.

He knew then that his strange destiny was running true to form, and that all the apparently random and pointless incidents of the past thirty-six hours, which have been recorded here as casually as they happened, could only be building towards the kind of eruptive climax in which he was always getting involved. But now he could go to sleep peacefully, secure in the certainty that something else would have to happen and that this would quite possibly show him what he had to do.

But he never dreamed how bizarre the dénouement was to be.

He made his own breakfast of eggs and instant coffee the next morning, and after that it seemed not too early to call Maureen Herald. He was prepared to have been told that there was a Do Not Disturb on her telephone, but instead the hotel operator reported eventually: *"Elle ne répond pas."* He was surprised enough to have it repeated, making sure there was no mistake.

He had his call transferred to the concierge, and pressed the question of when she had gone out. . . . He was told, about nine o'clock, and was happy to be ashamed of his trend of thought.

He would have to be patient a while longer, then, for the next development.

He drove to the section of the Pampelonne beach which they call "Tahiti," and walked along the sand far enough to get away from the densest crowd, which naturally clustered near the end of the road. Peeled down to his trunks, he stretched himself out to enjoy the sun and the scene with the timeless tranquillity of a lizard.

It seemed only a matter of minutes before the purple and orange Chris-Craft came around the point on his left and cruised slowly across the bay, just as it had done the day before. The same grotesque monster with blue-lensed eyes and giant cigar, clad in the same horrible combination of fluorescent green and crimson and yellow, sat up on the side and steered it in the same negligent manner, scanning the shore; only this time it was alone. The servile Wilbert had apparently been left to some other chore.

From time to time Undine's cigar waved back in response to a wave from some would-be playmate on the beach, but the speedboat purred on without swerving. It looked as if Sir Jasper was not in the mood for company today, or as if his regular wolf-promenade would be satisfied with only one specific quarry which he had not yet flushed.

The speedboat voyaged all the way down to the "Epi-Plage" at the southern end of the strand, where the more fanatical sun-worshippers regularly scandalized the conventional with their uninhibited exposures among the dunes, but even that did not seem to offer its colorific commodore what he was seeking. It turned, and retraced its course until it was almost opposite the Saint, and then suddenly poured on the power and veered out and away with a foaming arrogance that almost swamped two or three small craft which had the temerity to be near the path it had chosen, and disappeared to the northeast around the rocky salient of Cap du Pinet.

Simon glanced at his wrist watch, a habit of reference which was almost a reflex with him, and it showed a quarter to eleven.

He wondered what connection, if any, Undine's disinterest might have had with the outcome of the previous night; but he knew that this speculation was only an idle pastime.

When the heat began to become oppressive he went for a swim, and then he enjoyed the sun all over again. And it was twenty minutes to one before he felt restive—and recognized that the feeling was as much due to a plain gastric announcement of lunch time as to

any psychic impatience for new events.

Then he rolled over and saw Maureen Herald coming towards him.

In sun glasses and a chiffon scarf cowled over her head and knotted under her chin in the style of that season, she was like a hundred other girls on the beach except for the distinctively long-lined greyhound figure which her wet bikini clung to like paint—until she was close enough to reveal the classical delicacy of her face.

"Hi," she said.

Simon unwound himself vertically with a delight which surprised himself.

"Hi," he said. "I was wondering where we'd catch up. I called you about half-past nine, but you'd already gone out."

"I had to see Undine. I called you as soon as I could, but your phone didn't answer. I hoped I'd find you here."

"How did it go?"

She met his eyes squarely.

"He signed the contract."

She sat down, and he gave her a cigarette.

"Was it difficult?"

"It nearly was," she said. "You were wonderful to say nothing, the way you did, when I stood you up at the Sénéquier. But later on I was wishing you hadn't been such a good sport. He wasn't so bad at the restaurant, except that it was like being out with a brass band, but after dinner we had to go to his villa."

"Not to see etchings?"

"Not quite. To see if the contract had arrived. It might have come, he said, if it was sent special delivery. But of course it hadn't." She inhaled deeply. "Then he laid it on the line anyhow—what I'd have to do if he was going to sign. It was as corny as any old melodrama, but he was flying high by that time and he meant it. I was scared stiff."

"But Heaven will protect the working girl . . . the song says."

She gazed out towards the horizon unseeingly, as though she were watching a movie that was being projected on a screen inside her sunglasses, and her voice was a toneless commentary on what she saw replayed.

"The only thing I could think of was just as hysterically corny. I told him about my mother and my brother, and I said: 'That's th only reason I can't say no, but can't make myself pretend to en joy it. If you can enjoy it like that go ahead.' And I lay down limp lik a rag doll." She turned to Simo again, and gripped his arm in sudden gesture that was more lik a convulsive release of suppresse tension than anything personal "And it worked!"

"It licked him?"

"He told me to get out and com back in the morning for the con tract. He even let me take his ca

to go home and come back in."

"So that's where you were when I called."

She nodded.

"Of course I was afraid he'd have changed his mind. But he hadn't. He said if he'd had a sister who would have been ready to do as much for him, he might have felt a lot differently about women. It was a real tear-jerker. But he signed the contract, and that was that. I mailed it to my agent and came looking for you."

"Did he say you could play Messalina?"

"No. But it has to be a big part, for what they're paying. And however it turns out, I'll get the money, and that's the most important thing to me."

The Saint stood up, grinning, and put out a hand to help her to her feet.

"Then we've got something to celebrate. Let's go to the *Voile d'Or* at St Raphaël and introduce you to Monsieur Saquet's *bourride*. It's only the best on the whole Coast."

"Yes. I'm starving. You always have the most wonderful ideas."

As they trudged towards the road he asked: "Do you still have Undine's car?"

"No. I was glad to return it. Do you know, it's a Rolls Royce painted exactly like his speedboat, including the big monogram on the side. I took a taxi."

"In that outfit?"

She laughed.

"I'm afraid I'm not quite emancipated enough for that." She opened the plastic zipper bag she carried and took out a roll of cloth not much bigger than his fist, which shook out into a one-piece play-suit of some wrinkle-proof synthetic. In five seconds she was what daytime St. Tropez would have considered almost overdressed. "See?"

"What won't they make next," said the Saint admiringly. "So we can head straight for the fish kettle, without any footling about."

Thus it was that they made no stop in St. Tropez until mid-afternoon, and had no preliminary intimation of the mystery which was going to climax Sir Jasper Undine's career with its last headlines.

Maureen Herald said she would have to find a travel agency in the town to check on her return flight to London, so the Saint stopped in the parking lot near the Casino and walked with her to the Quai de Suffren. And there they ran into, or more literally were run into by a hustling and vaguely frantic Wilbert.

"Oh, it's you," he said brilliantly, when the fact had registered. "Do *you* know anything about Sir Jasper?"

"Several things," said the Saint. "And nearly all of them are uncomplimentary. What aspect would you like to hear about?"

"I mean, have you seen him, or anything?"

"I saw him making his usual prowl in the speedboat this morning. But he went off without any passengers. That was about a quarter to eleven. Why, what's the excitement?"

"Hadn't you heard?" spluttered the tycoon's stooge. "Sir Jasper has disappeared!"

Simon raised his eyebrows.

"Theoretically, I'd say that was impossible," he murmured. "He must be easily the most visible man in this hemisphere. He's probably even luminous in the dark."

"But he has! The Chris-Craft was found forty miles out at sea, with nobody in it. I just got a message that a French Navy patrol boat had brought it in."

"You're headed the wrong way," Simon said. "The Navy jetty is on the north side of the port, that-away. Let's go and view the salvage."

As they went, Wilbert managed to calm down sufficiently to supply some details.

"He had an engagement for lunch with the manager of one of his Italian subsidiaries who was coming specially from Rome, but he never got back for it. I know it was an important meeting and nothing but an accident would have kept him away. Of course, I was a bit surprised that he'd already taken the boat out alone when I arrived at ten-thirty, he's never done that before—"

"You don't sleep at the villa?"

"No, I'm staying at a hotel i town."

"Did he say anything to th servants?"

"They don't sleep in, either. The come in at two o'clock. Sir Jasp doesn't like anyone in the house night, except people he might i vite. You know . . ."

The Saint thought he knew, bu he avoided catching Maureen's ey

A Naval rating and a police se geant were jointly standing guar over Sir Jasper's effulgent sampa when they arrived and Wilbe identified himself. Both represent tives of the State promptly produc notebooks and began jabbering him at once, and Simon had to st in as interpreter. It appeared th the Navy was putting a lien on t boat for the cost of bringing it i and at the same time consideri the possibility of prosecuting t owner for endangering navigati by abandoning it on the high se while the Police were convinc that someone should be arrested b were trying to decide who and f what. Simon cheerfully assur them that Wilbert would take f responsibility for everything, a they were finally allowed on boa

In an open runabout of that ki there was not much to examine th could not have been seen from wharf, but Simon switched on ignition and pressed the starter b tons one after the other. Each gine turned over vigorously did not fire, and he saw that

needle of the fuel gauge remained t zero.

"Ran out of gas," he remarked. Do you suppose he tried to swim ack for some?"

"He could only swim a few trokes," Wilbert said, "and the oat was forty miles out!"

"He could have been picked up y another boat," Maureen said.

"Then they'd have brought him ome before this," said the Saint. Or if it was a liner that couldn't st turn around, they'd have a dio, and he'd 've got through to Vilbert right away."

"Suppose he was kidnapped?" ilbert suggested.

Simon rubbed his chin.

"I guess you can suppose it. But ho on earth would pay anything get him back?"

Any fingerprints that might be und on the boat would be hope-ssly confused by all the sailors o must have handled it, but ere were no immediately visible ces of the salvage operation, or any unusual behavior on board. fact, everything was commend-ly neat and clean, as Simon inted out.

"I hosed her down and tidied up yself when we came in yester-y." Wilbert said. "It's one of my bs."

The Saint frowned thoughtfully. "I suppose he made a lot of mess th those cigars?"

"Yes—ashes everywhere—" The roty young man caught his breath, and his Adam's apple bobbed. He looked around the boat in a startled way. "Good heavens! You mean—"

"I don't see any ashes," said the Saint.

Maureen bit her lip.

"This is fascinating," she said. "Just like playing detectives . . . Listen. Sir Jasper was really quite plastered last night. He must have had an awful hangover this morning. That would account for him not being in the mood to pick any girls up. And if his tummy was upset he probably couldn't stand to light a cigar. Was his cigar alight, Simon?"

"I'm damned if I know," said the Saint. "He didn't come in close enough. And who would 've noticed, anyhow?"

Then there was a new commotion on the dock, and they looked up and saw Lee Carozza and Dominique chattering with the guard detail. There was nothing more worth staying on the Chris-Craft for, and Simon and Maureen climbed back up and joined them, with Wilbert following.

"They told us at the Pinède," Carozza explained. "We were having the siesta, and they woke us up. But it's hard to believe he's been murdered."

"Who said he was?" Simon asked.

"That was the rumor. It is not true?"

Wilbert repeated the facts, very

precisely, with the addition of what they had observed and discussed in the boat, like a new member of an undergraduate committee making his first report.

"I am not a criminal expert," Carozza said at the end, looking very significantly at the Saint, "but how can it be anything but murder? I knew him, and he was not a man who would take a boat forty miles towards Africa by himself, with no one to admire him. He was taken out by someone who killed him and threw him overboard, and escaped in another boat."

"Why in another boat?" Simon inquired.

"To make a mystery. Like the famous *Marie Celeste,* the ship from which all the passengers and crew disappeared and left everything in perfect order. This was the work of an artist!"

His wife studied him fixedly.

"You are not often so quick to talk," she said. "Be careful that someone does not think you are describing yourself."

She had not given the Saint more than the most perfunctory recognition at the beginning, and she continued to ignore him as calmly as if they had never had anything but the casual introduction of the previous evening. It was hard even for him to believe in the reality of the tempting pressure of her body and the tantalization of her mouth that he had known in between, or the monstrous bargain that she had offered. Indubitably she was an actress with more intelligence than her directors gave her credit for, and if only as a tribute to that talent he had to nudge her off on a hazardous tack.

"If there's going to be any murder investigation," he said, "we might all have to look to our alibis.

"Lee and I could have nothing to do with it," she said scornfully. "All this morning we were in Nice, at the studio, where I do an interview for the television. And afterward we have lunch with a reporter from *France-Soir.* And we come back to our hotel, the Pinède for the siesta. We have no time for anything else.

"Simon and I were together," Maureen said, "from—when was it?—about a quarter to one until we met Mr Wilbert just now."

"I was at the villa," Wilbert said weakly. "Doing the petty cash accounts, going through letters, making a few phone calls—"

He was suddenly very helpless and bewildered.

"Alors," said the police sergeant who had been trying to regain command for a long while, "there must now be a proper statement from everyone."

"By all means," said the Saint. "And let me start with a simple debunking of the whole razzmatazz. Undine was drunk last night as witnessed by Miss Herald and doubtless many restauranteurs and waiters. This morning he had the *gueule de bois.* He also had an in-

portant business meeting to cope with. He went out for a spin in the speedboat to clear his head. And everyone knows he was a crazy boat driver. He made a turn too fast, and in his condition he lost his balance and fell overboard, and the boat went on without him. And let us all think kindly of him when we eat lobsters."

There was a sequel to this rambling anecdote almost a year later, when a production entitled *Messalina,* in Colossoscope and Kaleidocolor, was world-premiered with all the standard fanfares at the Caracalla auditorium in Rome, Italy, with simultaneous openings in six other towns called Rome in the United States.

Simon Templar, who was by nature attracted to such functions as irresistably as he would have been drawn to a cholera epidemic, was a notable guest; and one of the first personages that he encountered was a ginger-haired bat-eared apparition upon whom a white tie and tails conferred an appallingly pasteboard dignity.

"I gather that you were able to satisfy the *flics* about the loose points in your alibi," Simon greeted him genially.

"Of course, they had to accept it eventually." Wilbert inevitably reddened. "They could hardly get around the various people I'd talked to on the phone, which wouldn't have given me time to get far away from the villa. But it was rather awkward when it came out that Sir Jasper had made me the trustee of his will, and it was so loosely worded that I could do almost anything I liked."

"What did he leave his money to?"

"Most of it to found a motion picture museum, with the provision that one whole section has to be devoted to relics of himself and his productions."

"Modest to the last," murmured the Saint. "Well, you certainly gave him service while he was alive. But what I liked best was the way you cleaned up his boat the last time. If you hadn't been so conscientious, we wouldn't have had the cigar-ash clue."

"That didn't make a lot of difernce, did it?"

"It helped, Wilbert. It helped."

Dominique Rousse was posing for photographers while her husband stood a little apart, watching with his usual introspective detachment.

"Good evening, Mr Thomas," he said ironically, as Simon came towards him. "I suppose you couldn't wait to see how the picture turned out."

"I do feel a sort of personal interest," Simon confessed.

"I think you'll like what I did with Maureen Herald's part. It is big enough to justify her co-starring, without upsetting the balance of the play."

"Or upsetting Dominique, no doubt," said the Saint. "You don't need me to tell you you're a good writer. But you ought to be more careful of your own dialog."

"In what way?"

"You must know that one of the stock routines for a character to trip himself up in a detective story is to talk about a murder before he's been told that there's been one. If that police sergeant had understood English and been on the ball when you dropped that clanger, you might have had to finish your script in the pokey."

One of the photographers recognized the Saint, grabbed him unceremoniously, and dragged him over to Dominique.

With her sullen beauty, and a rope of diamonds twined in her red-blonde hair, and her stupendous figure revealed by a skin-tight green silk sheath cut low enough to prove to everyone that her world-famous bosom owed nothing to artificial enrichment, it took no effort at all to visualize her as a queen who could have had a pagan mob at her feet, even though she had demonstrated the moral instincts of a cat.

"Pretend to be pointing a gun at her," urged the photographer. "No, that's no good. Put a judo hold on her."

Simon took her by the wrist and twisted her arm gently behind her in such a way that she was pressed against him face to face.

"You could have done this long ago," she said in a whisper that scarcely moved her lips. "I told you I do not break my promise. Why have you not come to claim it?"

He smiled into her eyes.

"Some day I may," he said. "When I can make myself unscrupulous enough."

Finally he was able to rejoin Maureen Herald as another group of photographers tired of her.

"It was nice of you to come all this way to put up with this sort of thing," she said, taking his arm. "But I felt you ought to be here. After all, if you hadn't come up with the explanation of the Undine business, any of us might have been in an awkward spot."

"Somebody certainly owes me something," he admitted, "for helping to hide a murder."

They were moving into the theater, but she stopped to stare at him.

"You mean you've changed your mind since?"

"I always did think it was murder." He got her moving again. "It wasn't just the cigar-ash business, though that started me thinking. When Wilbert let out that Undine never took the boat out alone, I tried to fit that in. Then I remembered the clothes Undine was wearing, and that was the clincher. Undine's taste in color schemes was ghastly, but it wasn't monotonous. Undine wouldn't have just one hideous outfit, he'd 've had dozens, and he'd 've loved to knock your eye out with a different one every

day. *Therefore the man I saw in the boat on the second day wasn't Undine.*"

"Then who was it?"

"Somebody wearing his clothes and flourishing his cigar, padded out to his size with a cushion under the windbreaker. Between those huge sun-glasses and the goatee, which could even have been his own hair glued on, at the distance the boat stayed out, it was easy to get away with. Hundreds of people would swear it was Undine they'd seen. But Jasper himself was probably in the bottom of the cockpit with the anchor tied to him, waiting to be dumped overboard out of sight off the cape. Then all the murderer had to do was head the boat out to sea, jump out at a safe distance, and swim back."

"But why did you—"

"I wouldn't want anyone to get in trouble for killing Undine. I can't feel he was any loss to the world."

They found their seats at last and settled down.

"Anyway," he said, "I wouldn't have missed your performance for anything."

"It's not much of a part," she said, "but it'll help me. And the money was just like Christmas."

"I'm not talking about the picture," Simon said. "I'm talking about your performance at St. Tropez. Only your material wasn't quite good enough. I was having a hard time believing that a bastard like Undine had really been put off by your sob story. And then you were in just a little too much of a hurry to explain why there were no cigar ashes in the boat, when that came up. And then I realized that nobody else had a better motive for making it seem that Undine was still alive that morning. Several people had heard him say that your contract wouldn't arrive until then, and you had to wait to get it and forge his signature. Of course it took plenty of nerve; but I remembered that you'd started out as a nurse, so you wouldn't panic at the idea of handling a dead body, and I knew how well you could swim."

She turned her face to him with a kind of quiet pride.

"I didn't kill him," she said. "But when it came to the point I couldn't go through with what he wanted. I was struggling for my life, and he was like a madman—it meant that much to him, to get even for the time he thought I'd snubbed him in Hollywood. And then he suddenly collapsed. A heart attack. But all the rest is true."

"That makes it all the better," said the Saint.

He held her hand as the lights dimmed and the credit titles began.

blood-money

by . . . E. P. Oppenheim

THERE WAS something wrong with Mr. Billingham. For two days he had shown a marked lack of interest in his food, his drink and his gambling. The spring had laid its relaxing hand upon the hills and the little Principality; the sun had gained in strength, the flowers in the gardens were drooping, there were cracks in the smoothly shaven lawns, umbrellas at every table in the Café de Paris, and green verdure in place of the snows on the lower slopes of the mountains. Men were wearing flannels and straw hats, and some of the women had even ventured upon muslins. Mr. Billingham, however, seemed slow in responding to these genial signs of the advancing season. For several days he had shown a tendency almost to mope. The climax came when, at half an hour before his usual luncheon-time, he complained of his cocktail at Ciro's.

"Mais comment, monsieur?" the bartender exclaimed, "It is as I

The world of E. Phillips Oppenheim—and of the people met with in this and his other stories—was a world many of his readers would never know, and for this reason there is a temptation to dismiss this world as unreal and the creation of a man catering to the between-the-wars curiosity of the many about the few. . . . This was not so, of course. The Lotus Coast known to Mr. Billingham is still there. Only the people along the beach are different. And the voices are so much louder. . . .

From: E. Phillips Oppenheim's MR. BILLINGHAM, THE MARQUIS & MADELON
(1932, Little Brown, Boston)
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have always mixed it day by day for months."

"It tasted flat," Mr. Billingham pronounced—"Flat!"

There was nothing more to be said. The bartender withdrew with a pained look. The Marquis stared first at his friend's frosted glass, then at Mr. Billingham himself.

"My friend," he declared, "it is perhaps the liver. The cocktail is as always. The moment you enter the place Charles braces himself. You have even those much-to-be-treasured drops of absinthe at your disposal."

"It didn't taste good," Mr. Billingham insisted doggedly.

"We will try another," the Marquis suggested. "Charles! In case there should have been any slight discrepancy in the mixing, in case your elbow should have shaken with the angostura, your special attention, if you please."

Charles had scarcely recovered from his hurt, but he obeyed orders. He shook the cocktails himself in front of the two men and poured them out, waiting for the verdict. Mr. Billingham felt that he had perhaps been a little unreasonable.

"I guess the cocktail was all right, Charles," he admitted. "It's myself that's out of sorts."

Charles accepted the *amende* and withdrew. Mr. Billingham leaned forward and gripped his companion by the arm. His eyes were fixed upon two approaching figures.

"Say, Marquis," he demanded, "who the devil's the young man with Madelon?"

The Marquis adjusted his eyeglass and stared at the newcomers. Madelon was wearing a ravishing little gown of lemon-coloured linen, with an adorable little hat. Her companion was a tall, thin young Englishman in grey tweeds, who walked very slowly with the help of a stick.

"That is Captain Bruntingford," the Marquis answered. "Madelon introduced me to him last night."

"Know anything about him?" Mr. Billingham inquired.

"Nothing whatever," was the candid reply.

"Mademoiselle Madelon does, apparently, to judge from the way she's been going round with him the last few days," Mr. Billingham grunted.

The Marquis suddenly understood the cause of his friend's low spirits. Internally he amused himself; externally he remained placid.

"Madelon has, perhaps, an eye to business," her uncle remarked under his breath. "She is scarcely likely to find any other interest in the young man. Be careful! They arrive!"

Madelon entered the little glass-enclosed room with the sunshine streaming upon her hair, her eyes laughing, her step light and buoyant. She kissed her hand to Mr.

Billingham, installed her companion in a chair and placed his stick by his side.

"Mr. Billingham," she said, "let me introduce you in the best American fashion. Shake hands, if you please, with Captain Bruntingford, late of the British Army. Uncle, you have met Captain Bruntingford. Mr. Billingham, will you order us some of those cocktails with a little froth at the top. —or," she added, turning to the young man—

"I'd like a dry Martini, if I may," he begged.

Mr. Billingham gave the necessary orders. The little party joined forces. Mr. Billingham was prompt in extending an invitation to luncheon, but Madelon shook her head.

"I am lunching with Captain Bruntingford," she answered. "He would be quite polite if we turned it into a *partie carée*, but he would be very cross with me afterwards. Englishmen need so much humouring."

"Americans can get the needle sometimes," Mr. Billingham reminded her.

"Not wise Americans," she replied—"not really good and kind Americans, who like their friends to be happy and who trust them. Besides, Captain Bruntingford and I have serious matters to discuss."

The cocktails were drunk and approved. Madelon helped her companion out of his chair, gave him his stick and they departed. Mr. Billingham stared after them gloomily.

"Who the devil is this fellow Bruntingford," he asked again.

"I expect Madelon will tell you presently," her uncle replied cautiously. "I know nothing about him myself. At the same time—"

"Well."

"I do not fancy that Madelon is only amusing herself. She has, what you call, the eye to business, as we, too, upon occasion."

Mr. Billingham found the suggestion consoling. He was able, even, to find some slight interest in his luncheon. Afterwards Madelon unexpectedly joined them. They had the corner table on the terrace and she accepted a chair and some coffee. An older woman might have found the streaming sunshine disconcerting. It brought out the flecks of gold from Madelon's hair, but the faint violet lines under her eyes—perhaps a little more readily visible in the flood of light—were, owing to the freshness of her complexion, only intriguing.

"Tell us, my dear," the Marquis invited, "more of your friend, Captain Bruntingford."

Madelon shut her vanity case with a click.

"I like the type," she said, "and he orders the right sort of things to eat. He has just the right tone, too, with head-waiters. In short,

I find him quite an agreeable companion."

"Is this sufficient," the Marquis ventured, "to account for the enthusiasm with which you have accepted his recent invitations?"

"Perhaps not altogether," she conceded. "You see, he was wounded in nineteen-fourteen, and afterwards he was attached to the Intelligence Department of the British Army. His section seems to have been broken up since the war and he has gone into partnership with a firm of private detectives."

The Marquis tapped a cigarette upon the table-cloth.

"Indeed," he murmured.

"That sounds kind of interesting," Mr. Billingham observed.

"He is out here," she continued, "on some sort of business for his firm. That is exactly as much as he has confided in me. I am beginning to believe," she went on, with a sigh, "that it is as much as he means to tell me. And I am just a little curious."

Madelon paused for a moment. She was gazing out of the window through the dark green of the gardens, towards the stucco front of the Casino.

"Every afternoon," she proceeded, "he drives himself in a little two-seated car towards La Turbie; always in the same direction, always about the same hour. Another thing about that expedition rather interests me, too. Always, before he starts, he feels in his pocket to be sure that his revolver is there."

"But how observant!" the Marquis murmured.

Madelon shrugged her shoulders.

"The sort of grey tweed lounge suit which he wears," she said, "is not made for carrying things in the pocket of which you wish to conceal the shape. Then, there is one other somewhat singular circumstance. Although he is liberal with his invitations to me for luncheons, dinners and suppers, he has never once asked me to accompany him in that afternoon drive."

The Marquis smiled faintly.

"A little piqued!" he commented.

"Possibly," Madelon assented. "In any case it has occurred to me that it was my turn to bring something into the bag."

Mr. Billingham smoked serenely. He was feeling a little more content with life.

"There may not be room for us to butt in," he remarked. "He may be just collecting evidence in some divorce case. These detective agencies don't as a rule handle the big jobs."

"Nevertheless, I am intrigued," Madelon persisted. "There is much about Captain Bruntingford that interests me. Sometimes in the middle of a dinner or a luncheon I have seen a shadow pass over his face, and a light in his eyes as

though there were something near which he feared. I have seen him start when someone has nearly run into us at a corner. I am sure that he is a brave man, yet I am sure that he has been living in fear."

"The remains of shell-shock, perhaps," Mr. Billingham speculated. "Has he taken that little red car out this afternoon?"

Madelon nodded.

"He has taken it out and gone just the same way—upon the route the cars take for La Turbie."

"It's a fine afternoon," Mr. Billingham said. "I'll hire an automobile and treat you to a spin. We'll go up to the Golf Club to tea."

Madelon hesitated, but it was obvious that the idea attracted her.

"I should love to come," she admitted. "Only, if we do happen to meet Captain Bruntingford in his red car, I hope he will not think that we are following him."

"It's an open road," Mr. Billingham reminded her, "and there are plenty of others upon it. We'll get a move on right away and see the sunset from the top."

The little party started within a quarter of an hour. They never reached La Turbie. About halfway up the narrow road which leads into the upper Corniche, just after negotiating a very awkward bend, they came upon an all too common sight in this region of mountainous roads and reckless driving. A little crowd of people were gathered on the edge of the precipitous slope. The remains of a small car lay upside-down, partially concealed by a huge volume of smoke and steam and with little flames bursting from the petrol tank. A few yards away something was stretched upon the ground, covered by a mackintosh sheet. Mr. Billingham touched the driver upon the arm, and by his directions the automobile was brought to an abrupt standstill.

"I shouldn't come on, Miss Madelon," he advised. "Let the chauffeur back with you to the corner. The Marquis and I will see if there is anything to be done."

Madelon was looking straight ahead of her. The colour had left her cheeks, but her voice was quite steady.

"The little red car!" she exclaimed.

Mr. Billingham nodded.

"I thought it might be," he assented. "I'm afraid by the way they've covered the body up there isn't much left of poor Captain Bruntingford."

Madelon half closed her eyes.

"I think perhaps you are right," she murmured. "Please come back to me soon."

The car was reversed slowly to the corner and left in a safe place. From below a large police motor van came tearing up the hill, and from above a doctor's automobile from La Turbie was winding its

way to the scene of the disaster. Mr. Billingham and the Marquis joined the little crowd of people. No one seemed to know much of what had happened. The car had struck the low grey stone wall at the side of the road and turned over. The driver was apparently quite dead; his neck must have been broken.

"Better let me, see," Mr. Billingham suggested. "I'm not a medical man, but I did a little amateur surgery in the war."

They made way for him and he lifted the waterproof cover. When, a few moments later, he rose from his knees, most of his healthy colour had departed. The doctor from above and a police *commissaire* from below arrived almost together. Mr. Billingham took the Marquis by the arm and led him a little way down the hill. They could see the marks of the car, could see where it had apparently skidded and overturned. About twenty or thirty paces further on was a small villa, enclosed by a high wall of white plaster. Mr. Billingham looked at it speculatively. Then he looked back at the little group, at the police *commissaire* and the doctor, both bending over the prostrate form. An ambulance which had followed the police car was now drawn up.

"Guess there's nothing else we can do," Mr. Bilingham said. "We'll get back to Miss Madelon."

They returned, Mr. Billingham thoughtful and curiously silent. The Marquis answered the inquiry in his niece's eyes with a grave little nod.

"A very serious affair, I am afraid, my dear," he told her kindly. "The car seems to have struck the wall, skidded, and overturned. Poor fellow! He is quite dead."

"How terrible!" Madelon murmured. "And how strange," she added a moment later. "I saw him drive once or twice and I thought he was especially skilful. The roads are not slippery. Why should he skid?"

Mr. Billingham came back from his brown study.

"I should say," he remarked, "that it was not exactly a skid. He lost control of the machine."

"But why?" Madelon demanded.

Mr. Billingham pointed to the little pink villa behind the high, plastered wall.

"Because the poor fellow was shot—probably from that villa—on his way up the hill," he announced gravely. "Naturally he lost control of the car and over it went. As a matter of fact his neck was broken as well."

"You mean that he was murdered?" Madelon gasped.

"Not the slightest doubt about it," Mr. Billingham replied. "He was shot well on the left-hand side, and there seems to be no cover anywhere near except from that

villa. I heard one of the labourers say that they heard the report of a tyre-burst. As a matter of fact it must have been the report of the rifle."

"Did you tell the *commissaire?*" Madelon asked, as they started off on their homeward journey.

Mr. Billingham shook his head.

"He didn't need any telling," he replied. "Neither he nor the doctor can make any mistake about that. What I am curious about," he went on, "is just this. There's a heap of talk about the way accidents and sudden deaths and motor catastrophes are hushed up in this part of the world. Now we shall be able to judge for ourselves."

A few days later the very suave functionary who presided over the lives and liberties of the Monégasques received a call from Mr. Billingham. He welcomed him with cordiality.

"Official or unofficial?" was his first question.

Mr. Billingham considered the matter.

"Because," the other continued, "officially I can be dumb; unofficially I am able to remember that we are good friends, that you have done us services, that you are not one of these people who go about making trouble unnecessarily."

"My visit is unofficial," Mr. Billingham announced. "I came to ask whether you have formed any conclusions as to how that poor fellow came by his death—the fellow in the little red motor-car."

The police functionary shrugged his shoulders.

"Our roads are dangerous to those not accustomed to them," he declared.

"No one," Mr. Billingham retorted, "can drive a car successfully with a bullet wound in his heart."

The functionary stroked his chin.

"You noticed that, too?" he observed.

"I did," Mr. Billingham replied. "I also noticed that the only very brief report of the accident described it as being due to a skid and Captain Bruntingford's death due to a broken neck."

"His neck was certainly broken," the other remarked—"a sufficient cause of death, I think."

"Have you no curiosity," Mr. Billingham inquired, "as to the bullet wound?"

The other shook his head.

"We are never curious here about these things," he observed. "Besides, what good purpose is served by destroying what is after all an amiable fiction. It is better for the world to believe that this young man died of a broken neck through a motor accident than that he shot himself."

"Shot himself?" Mr. Billingham murmured. "Ah! . . . By the by, was the weapon found?"

"Not to my knowledge," the police functionary admitted. "To tell you the truth, I sent two men up to search, but they were unsuc-

cessful. There were a good many men at work in the fields and on the roads, and I am afraid that anything in the way of fire-arms is looked upon as a rather desirable acquisition amongst these people."

"I follow you," Mr. Billingham murmured. "You know that I am not a chatterbox. For the moment, nothing more! Oblige me with one piece of information."

"By all means."

"I should like the dossiers of the inmates of the little villa—'Les Mimosas' it is called—quite close to where the young man met with his accident."

The police functionary looked across at his visitor keenly.

"Why?" he demanded.

Mr. Billingham shrugged his shoulders.

"An idea," he replied.

"They shall be at your hotel within two hours," the other promised. "In the meantime——"

"We are of one mind," Mr. Billingham declared. "The young man must have friends, probably relations. Let it remain at a broken neck. But be sure I have my dossiers. There is one thing more, too. If any of Captain Bruntingford's business friends should come over from England, will you ask them to favour me with a call?"

"With pleasure," was the ready response.

It was one of the pleasing practices of Mr. Billingham's cleanly life to perform certain acrobatic exercises in his bathroom every morning. He was lying upon his back, pummelling his stomach with both fists and indulging at the same time in deep breathing, when a knock at the door, the next morning, disturbed his praiseworthy efforts at maintaining his physical condition.

"What is it?" he demanded, sitting up.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," was the floor-waiter's reply.

Mr. Billingham reflected for a moment.

"Show the gentleman into the *salon*," he directed, "and leave his card on my tea-tray."

The footsteps outside passed along. Mr. Billingham abandoned further attempts to reduce his girth and jumped into his bath. Five minutes later, with tousled hair and glowing face, he picked up the card which reposed upon his tray.

"MR. JAMES H. BERRY."
And underneath, in small type—
"Berry and Bruntingford,
Private Inquiry Agency."

Mr. Billingham poured himself out a cup of tea, with it in his hand, passed through to his *salon*. A small man, with sandy hair and an indifferent complexion, wearing gold-rimmed spectacles and obviously of furtive habits, rose to his feet as he entered.

"Mr. Billingham, sir," he said. "I

fear that I have disturbed you too early."

"Don't you worry," was the cheerful reply. "We get up a trifle late here. Monte Carlo isn't New York, or London either for that matter. Glad to see you, sir."

He shook hands and waved his visitor to a chair.

"You are Captain Bruntingford's partner, I gather," he went on. "Terrible affair! What was the game out here, eh?"

Mr. Berry felt his breath being taken away. He removed his spectacles and polished them.

"I am very much disturbed, Mr. Billingham," he confided. "The news of this accident to Captain Bruntingford was a great shock."

"Accident?" Mr. Billingham repeated.

His visitor nodded gravely.

"He was, I understand, killed in a motor accident."

"I guess not," Mr. Billingham objected. "He was murdered."

The little man jumped out of his chair. Then he leaned forward and looked at Mr. Billingham, his hands gripping its sides.

"You don't mean that?" he gasped.

"I surely do," Mr. Billingham replied. "He was shot through the heart. That's how the motor accident happened."

There was no doubt about it that Mr. Berry was not only taken by surprise but that he was deeply moved. He dabbed his forehead with his handkerchief.

"I told Bruntingford," he declared, "that it wasn't our class of business. Too risky and not enough to it! He wouldn't listen to reason. Murdered! Good God! They didn't tell me this at the police station."

"They wouldn't," was the curt rejoinder. "Murders and suicides never happen in Monte Carlo—just accidents, that's all!"

"Well, well, well!" Mr. Berry exclaimed helplessly. "To think they'd go as far as that!"

"Who's 'they'?" Mr. Billingham demanded.

His visitor shivered.

"How much do you know?" he asked.

"Nothing," Mr. Billingham confessed.

"Where do you come in, then?" the other inquired, a little puzzled.

"I don't come in," Mr. Billingham admitted. "I want to. I should like to take on Bruntingford's job—whatever it was. That is, unless you're going to take it on yourself?"

Mr. Berry dabbed his forehead again.

"Take it on myself!" he repeated. "I'd sooner starve first. It ain't my idea of pleasant business, sir, and that's a fact."

"No?" Mr. Billingham murmured sympathetically.

"Give me the makings of a divorce case, or the chance of collecting evidence in a slander job, or

even a bit of blackmail, and I'm on the spot," Mr. Berry continued. "When it comes to these big things with desperate people up against one—well, all I say is 'take the job somewhere else.' It's what I told Bruntingford, only he wasn't having any. He'd got used to these tough affairs in the Army."

"Put me wise about this," Mr. Billingham begged. "I'm interested."

Mr. Berry cleared his throat. Somehow or other this powerful pink-and-white-looking man, in his bath robe, still glowing from his exercises, inspired him with confidence. He accepted a cigarette, and Mr. Billingham, after a moment's departure from the room, returned with another cup of tea, helped himself to a cigar, and, crossing his legs, settled down in an easy-chair, with a liberal display of underclothes.

"Bruntingford was after forty thousand pounds," Mr. Berry explained. "I never believed he'd get it, and he didn't. He got something else instead and it's my belief that the next person who goes after that forty thousand will get his the same way."

"What is it?" Mr. Billingham inquired. "Stolen money?"

"Blood-money!" was the hushed reply.

"You've got me guessing," Mr. Billingham confessed.

"Eh?"

"What kind of blood-money?"

Mr. Berry hitched his chair a little closer.

"The Johnny who first came to see Bruntingford," he confided, "was one of them foreigners, and he was marked down for trouble right enough. Never came except after dusk, and he was scared stiff if ever there was a footstep on the stairs. Got a cough, he had, too, enough to split him open. I didn't understand a word of their lingo. Bruntingford had to tell me afterwards. It seems the little chap was a Russian—had been in the police, and got into trouble. He bolted from Russia and brought some of the papers from headquarters with him. It was through these he got on to the game. The Russian Government, if there is such a thing, wants that chap Kitilsky who ran things there for a bit after they wiped the Tsar out. He escaped when the Bolshevists took hold, but he's alive still and they want him."

"Why?" Mr. Billingham demanded.

"Got some papers, for one thing," Mr. Berry confided, "and they believe he knows where there's some stolen gold hidden. Anyhow, they want him bad. Ten thousand pounds reward they offered. The little chap, just before he hopped it, got on to the lay. He reckoned Kitilsky was living at a villa somewhere back of Monte Carlo. He daren't leave London himself, though, and daren't claim the reward. He wanted Bruntingford to

take hold and see what arrangement he could make. He found most of the money and Bruntingford came out here. Looks as though he had discovered his man if your story's the truth."

"I guess that's so."

There was a moment's silence. Mr. Billingham proffered a cigar, which was promptly accepted.

"You going on with this show?" the latter inquired.

Mr. Berry hesitated. There was a cunning gleam in his eyes.

"I'm none too keen," he confessed. "I'd rather sell my share."

"Your share?"

"The reward."

Mr. Billingham smiled.

"You mean you'd like to get home with a sound skin."

"I was never one of the fighting sort," Mr. Berry admitted apologetically.

"I tell you what I'll do," Mr. Billingham suggested. "I'll look into this matter. I can't say I've got properly the hang of it yet, but I'd kinder like to say a word or two to some one in that villa."

"You're tackling it yourself?" Mr. Berry asked, with a shiver.

"I guess so," Mr. Billingham admitted. "I don't know as I see clearly as to the financial side of it yet, but I'll give you a third of anything I pick up."

"It's a go?" was the eager reply. "I'll stay here for a few days on the chance."

Mr. Berry brought his visit to a close. He looked around the room wonderingly.

"What are you taking this on for?" he demanded. "You seem to have plenty of the stuff already—living here like a prince!"

Mr. Billingham smiled.

"Appearances are sometimes deceptive," he confided, as he showed his guest out. "Besides, there is always the adventure!"

Mr. Billingham, later in the morning, drove up to the Villa des Mimosas in a closed car which he had hired in the Casino Square. He passed the crumpled-up remains of the little red automobile, and descended in a few moments before a huge nail-studded door let into the plastered wall. He pushed down the iron handle with a jerk, but found, as he had expected, that it was fastened on the other side. Rather to his surprise, however, after scarcely a moment's delay a little click was heard and the door was released by means of a catch from within. He stepped into a narrow stretch of garden; uncared for and overgrown with weeds. The front door of the villa had been opened and upon the threshold a woman was standing. Mr. Billingham recognized her at once as an *habituée* of the Casino—a florid-looking woman with too much flesh, too much jewellery, ill-powdered and besmeared with rouge. She was untidily dressed. Her hair was tousled. There was a hole in her black felt

slippers. After the somewhat tense sensations of his impending arrival, Mr. Billingham was conscious of a curious sense of something inadequate in the situation. His surprise was increased when the woman addressed him in English.

"Are you the English doctor?" she inquired.

"American," Mr. Billingham replied, with ready presence of mind.

"The same thing," she muttered. "Come in."

She closed the door carefully behind him. Mr. Billingham caught a glimpse of an unkempt-looking man securing the outside gate. The hall of the villa was dirty, ill-kept and almost devoid of furniture.

The woman paused there. She spoke in a hoarse, husky whisper.

"I don't know that you can do anything," she said. "It's about all up. He wouldn't have a doctor before, though. The only chance is you might be able to keep him going for a week or two."

"Let me see him," Mr. Billingham enjoined.

She opened one of the doors which led out of the hall. Mr. Billingham found himself in what might have once been the *salon* of the villa, but was now a nondescript apartment, containing only a few oddments of furniture, heavy with cigarette smoke, malodorous from the closed windows and reminiscences of past meals. Although it was a brilliantly sunny morning, a pair of shabby curtains were completely drawn—the light in the room was so dim, indeed, that Mr. Billingham nearly blinked. There was heat coming somewhere from a closed stove, and stretched upon a sofa by its side was the emaciated figure of a man wrapped in a dressing-gown. His throat was so skinny that its cords seemed to stand out almost singly. His deep sunken eyes were unnaturally large, brilliant with an uncanny light. His white face was disfigured by many days' growth of black and stubbly beard, his fingers were yellow with the stain of nicotine. By the side of his couch was a small table and a miniature roulette board. Close to it was the seat from which the woman had risen. By the side of the roulette board was a strip of paper and a pencil. The man spoke to the woman in a language of which Mr. Billingham knew nothing, and pointed to her seat. She replied soothingly. He shook his head and broke out once more. Then he coughed. She leaned over and patted his shoulder.

"You had better wait for a moment," she said, turning to Mr. Billingham. "Every day we do this," she went on, pointing to the board. "We spin twenty numbers. I take the results down and go to the Casino and back the same numbers in the same order. It is the only thing which distracts his thoughts since he cannot go himself. We have finished seventeen. Will you wait?"

"I will wait," Mr. Billingham agreed.

The woman resumed her seat, threw in the ball and turned the wheel. The man leaned over, watching it eagerly. He took note of the number with a little air of satisfaction and muttered something, whilst the woman scribbled it down in pencil upon her list. Twice more the operation was repeated. Then the man leaned back. He spoke a few faint words; apparently in Russian. The woman appeared to assent and he closed his eyes. She drew Mr. Billingham a little on one side.

"He wants me to hurry off to the Casino," she explained. "He says if I do so he will let you examine him."

Mr. Billingham opened his mouth and closed it again. There were tears streaming down the woman's terrible face; a sob choked in her throat.

"I am afraid," Mr. Billingham began.

He stopped short. The door was opened. A man stood there; corpulent, unprepossessing. He wore only a pair of black trousers and a flannel shirt. He was the man who had closed the gate. He spoke to the woman; again in that incomprehensible jargon. She listened and turned towards Mr. Billingham. Her face had hardened, her tone was suspicious.

"There is a man here who says that he is the doctor," she announced.

"He is probably right," Mr. Billingham admitted.

"Who are you, then?" she demanded.

"I came to see who fired the shot from this villa which killed Bruntingford," Mr. Billingham declared, keeping his hand near his hip pocket and his eyes wandering from the woman to the man.

The woman's face had been terrible before, but something of real fury gave it for a moment almost a diabolical expression. Her lips were parted. She remained, however, unexpectedly silent. There was a moan—a low moan but ending in a still more terrible sound—from the man upon the couch.

"The doctor!" Mr. Billingham exclaimed.

She called out something to the servitor. A little dark man with a black bag entered. She pointed to the couch.

"Go out and wait," she ordered Mr. Billingham.

He went into the dirty hall and sat upon a crazy cane chair. The atmosphere of the place stifled him. Presently he withdrew the bolts from the big door and found his way out into the tangled wilderness of garden which still remained beautiful. He wiped the perspiration from his forehead and waited. It was probably half an hour before anything happened. Then the

woman came out. She advanced slowly towards him, and Mr. Billingham—who had seldom known fear—was conscious of a strange new sensation in his veins; a feeling that the sun had passed from the heavens and that there was sulphur in the air.

"You came to find out who fired that shot," she said. "I did."

"Why?" he demanded.

"That he should end his days a free man," was the solemn answer. "That has arrived. Are you of the police? I am ready!"

Mr. Billingham shook his head.

"The police do not know," he assured her hoarsely. "What about him?"

"He is dead," she announced. "He died—just then."

Mr. Billingham twirled his hat in his hand. It was so sordid, incomprehensible, amazingly unreal. Through a little clump of olive trees, he saw that the gate remained open.

"My affair here is finished," he said. "I will go."

She nodded.

"Go!" she assented. . . . "You are fortunate," she added, a moment or two later, "that you did not come a few days ago with your question."

"You know, of course, that there was a great reward for information about him?"

"I have known it for years," she admitted. "Nevertheless I kept him hidden. We had always two foes to fight—spies and starvation."

"And now about yourself?" he asked.

She stared at him. Another button of her dress had given way. She seemed more ragged than ever.

"Myself!" she repeated. "What does it matter? He is dead!"

NEXT MONTH

CLAUD EUSTACE TEAL, FOR ONE DAZED MOMENT,
THINKS HE SEES DARK AND LONELY YEARS AHEAD
AS HE FACES A SIMON TEMPLAR WHO
AGAIN CHALLENGES HIM IN

THE MELANCHOLY JOURNEY OF MR. TEAL

A SAINT NOVEL by LESLIE CHARTERIS

—in the September ***SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE***

beneficiary

by . . . Kate Wilhelm

FOR THREE WEEKS after Ellen inherited that money I watched it building up between her and Harry. Twenty thousand dollars, that's what she got. She told me about that no-good brother of hers plenty of times, and then he ups and makes her his beneficiary, and it was eating away at them. I watched and wondered who would be first to start things moving; just a bystander, you might say, until I decided to leave the audience and join the cast.

They came to the apartment building right after they married, fourteen years ago. Temporarily, she said then. "We'll stay here until we decide where to build. Harry's in business, too, you know." She thought because of my wheel chair that I didn't know what went on, but people tell me things. One time or another nearly everyone in the building would stop by the magazine stand and gossip a bit.

I knew about Harry and the hardware shop three blocks down. His father had it before him, and before that it had been a blacksmith's shop. It hadn't been cleaned good, they said, since the last horse left.

It is difficult to describe Kate Wilhelm, . . . She is young. Yes. . . . She is a housewife. Yes. . . . She lives in Louisville, Kentucky. Yes. . . . AND she is also an unusually able new writer who has a gift for setting herself into the minds of those about whom she writes and who has now worked for some years in this field and s-f.

But I didn't say any of that to Ellen.

She was a pretty girl then. Big eyes full of hope and blue as the sky after rain. Her hair was soft yellow instead of the broom straw blond it gradually became, and she made me feel old and musty just looking at her. She worked for awhile, had an operation, and from then on just stayed in the apartment waiting for her big chance to show up at the door.

She'd come down and visit with me pretty often when she couldn't stand being alone with the tv any longer. Sometimes she'd come to my place and we'd have tea, or she'd bring a coffee cake and we'd have a little party, just the two of us. She wasn't a bad person, but there was a lot of nonsense in that peroxided head.

"Mattie, don't you wish you could just see it for yourself," she'd say staring dreamily at the latest *Life* or *Look* featuring the glamour wedding of the season.

That was her worst fault, I guess. She never outgrew her high-school-girl yen for glamour. She bought up a copy of every Hollywood scandal magazine, every *Vogue, Bride, Glamour,* everything that touched that glittering magic circle. I suppose she knew by heart every wedding that took place among the upper crust in the past ten years. And every divorce and child born and rumor. She was celebrity nuts.

"Mattie, I'd give up ten years of my life if I could just once go to Las Vegas and act like they do. You know, have a shiny car, and evening gowns down to here, and drink champagne. Just for one week. Or one day even."

"Quit dreaming, Ellen. People like us don't do them things."

"Oh, I don't know. It wouldn't cost so much. I could live out there for a long time on a couple of hundred dollars, I bet. I wouldn't gamble or anything. Just watch them."

"Act your age, Ellen. That's kid stuff. Be grateful for what you got."

"What I got! A bum that can't stay awake ten minutes after he gets his shoes off. His idea of fun is to have some jerks in for beer and poker. Grateful!"

I couldn't look at her for awhile or she'd have seen the hate in my eyes. She had good legs and a strong back. She didn't look at her own hands every morning when she woke up, look at them for signs of swelling in the joints that meant the arthritis was getting them too. I didn't say anything; I'd learned not to, but sometimes she made me sick talking all the time about what she wanted. We all wanted something.

After she got that money the hope came back to her eyes, and I realized that it had been gone a long time. She got her hair done at the beauty shop and had a facial and new clothes. She didn't look her thirty-six years any more, until you got close to her.

"Look at me, Mattie! Twenty-five

dollar skirt! Me! And the sweater is cashmere, and the coat is angora. Mattie, did you ever see thirty dollar shoes? Look!"

That's how she was that first week. Every day it was something new. She always stopped by the stand to show me, not really bragging, but more like a kid with his own private Santa Claus. I guess she never gave it a thought how it made me feel, but she should have. I could see that the money wouldn't last long.

The second week there was a thoughtful look on her face sometimes when she'd be looking at one of those magazine pictures and her mind would wander. I knew she was seeing herself in them.

"You know, Mattie," she said one day, "I'm not too old for men to give a second look to. With the right clothes, in the right place, I might even have a chance." She was talking low, looking beyond me, through the walls of the grimy building at her tomorrow. She snapped her mouth shut and picked up a handful of magazines and tossed a ten on the counter. "Never mind the change, Mattie," she said and there was a little smile on her face as she went toward the elevator.

That's when I knew what she was thinking. She could go to New York or Las Vegas or Hollywood and live it up on the twenty thousand—if she were alone. And she might even get herself another husband, one with money this time. A new name, new clothes, the money . . . the money. Why was it someone like that always got money?

If anything, Harry was more obvious when his idea came to him. Some mornings he would stop and chat when he got his morning paper and a magazine or paper-back to pass the day with. I always say you can tell a lot about a person by what he reads. And Harry read adventure stories. The true adventures of hunting and fishing and traveling to exotic lands. I got so that I read enough of the stories he did so that he could talk to me about them. He was real pleased at that. As for me, well, when you're shut up behind a magazine stand all the time and alone, you do foolish things to make people notice you and talk to you. You want to reach out and grab them and make them stay longer. After a bit I'd learned which hook to use on most of the tenants.

"I could go by tramp," he used to say wistfully. "I could work my way around the world." Then he'd sigh and peer near-sightedly at me with a grin, as if it had been a joke and he wanted to see if I was laughing. He was forty-three, balding, pudgy and pale looking from being inside the store all the time. He never talked much about Ellen except to kid about her cooking. Once he did say that she had been a swell cook when they married, but I guess

boredom and a bare subsistence budget and his lack of enthusiasm had killed off that bit of sparkle in their lives.

Mostly they just endured each other in silence. They never argued much or seemed particularly mad at each other; they didn't care enough even to fight. Harry wanted to travel with the money, and Ellen wanted a grand fling. Harry knew one day he'd come back and she would be gone; I could tell looking at him that he knew, and he was resigned to it—at first. Then right before my eyes the other idea hit him. He was standing with his elbow on the counter glancing through *Holiday*.

"Says here a family of four went from Texas to Alaska for ninety-seven dollars. The fellow made the trailer himself." He flashed the picture in my direction. "Ninety-seven dollars. Think where a few thousand could take you. A guy wouldn't ever have to come back." I watched his face and I could have put down the exact time when he thought of it. He walked away without paying and I put a note by their name so I'd remember to bill them for the *Holiday*.

I thought then that he'd make it first simply because he was afraid not to act fast, before she got away. It wouldn't be too much of a problem for him. He had a lot of stuff he could lay his hands on, and then, too, he read so many of those stories that he must have known pretty much how the police operate and what to do and what to avoid. On the other hand, Ellen didn't have any reason to keep hanging around. She might still win by vanishing before he got around to it.

Of course, they could have just split the money and gone their separate ways, but money does strange things to people. I watched and I knew how it changed them into schemers who wouldn't be stopped by anything. I guess seeing the chance to make a dream come true is enough to change anyone.

I watched them and laughed inside at them. Ellen made the first move and for the first time I began to feel in it. She began complaining about roaches in the kitchen. "Nasty things. You'd think they would call in exterminators. We pay enough."

Roaches? Her worrying about roaches there when she was getting ready to pull out? It's a wonder that she didn't see then that I guessed it all.

"Why don't you ask Mrs. O'Daniels up on the fourth floor about that stuff she put out couple years ago," I said innocently. I didn't miss her quick look of satisfaction. I thought all along that she remembered it, too. It wasn't enough for her to walk out then. She had to be sure she was really free of him.

"What's that?"

"I don't know. She said it was pretty deadly though. You know,

her husband got it at work for her. She used to tell me how scared she was while it was down. Afraid some of it might get in their food or something. Really poisonous."

"Bet it got rid of the bugs, didn't it?" She was almost too excited to notice the new issue of *Charm*.

"Oh, sure. No trouble since then." I didn't ask and she didn't say so, but she went right up; I watched the elevator indicator stop at four with her on it. Later when it happened, I'd back up her story that it was my idea to use the deadly, blue powder, and then I'd cut myself in. That's when I began feeling a personal excitement about it. I knew I could handle her later. But Harry? I wasn't so sure. He'd be gone too fast. All afternoon I thought and my stomach tingled when I finally decided what to do about Harry if he beat her to the punch.

That night when he came in, I called him over. "Harry, I want to ask a favor. I been thinking and I decided I should write a will. You know, I don't have much here, but I should arrange things real neat like while I'm thinking of it."

"Mattie," he protested, a little shocked and scared and uneasy all together, "you shouldn't talk like that. It's bad luck to write a will."

"Please, Harry. You're the only one I know who can tell me how to say it. I'm not about to pay a lawyer ten dollars or more just for five minutes of his time. Probably would charge double for coming here."

"Ok, Mattie, ok. There's nothing to it. You just write in your own handwriting what you want done with your stuff, date it and sign it and put it away somewheres and forget it."

I frowned down at my hands and let my eyes wander over the books stacked about me. "Is there a book here that tells what to say? I can't remember seeing one. I'm not much good with words."

"It's real simple," he said patiently. "Got some paper? Look, you say, 'I,' and your name here," he left a blank space, "'being of sound mind.' Look. I'll make a sample for you to go by. You don't need to make it just the same, but for ideas. Ok?"

I watched him write it out in his precise letters and when he straightened. I admired his work. "It's really legal sounding, Harry. You have a lawyer help you with yours?"

"Naw. I ain't got a will. Told you it's bad luck. But that's how they are in books, and the judge always says as long as it's the guy's own handwriting it's legal as a fifty dollar lawyer written will." He started across the tomb-like lobby. "See you later, Mattie. Put my name down twice, will you?"

We both laughed and I began gathering in the loose things to close up for the night. It had been a good day.

I was staying up rather later

than I was used to, but even so, each morning I couldn't wait for time to open the stand. My eyes kept going back to the clock over the outside door while my hands arranged things automatically. I made a bet with myself each morning that nothing had happened, or that he'd come down and say that she'd left in the night, or that she fell in the tub and drowned, or that she would come down screaming that he'd sprinkled the roach stuff on his french toast. The only thing I was afraid of was that she might get cold feet and just leave him. But days went by and nothing happened. He came down at eight-fifteen and bought his paper and chatted a minute or so and went to work. She might not make it down for shopping until ten or eleven.

What were they waiting for?

She was buying stuff at a fantastic rate. Every day she came in loaded with boxes and packages, and she seldom stopped with them any more. When the suspense became too much I asked about the roaches.

"Exterminating business is thriving," she grinned. "Mr. O'Daniels got hold of that stuff they used and let me have some. I'm careful about using it, like he said. Spread it on papers at night and Harry takes it up again first thing next morning. Should see results from it, I guess. Or, in this case, when I quit seeing them, I'll know for sure I've had results."

So now Ellen was joking. I laughed harder than she did.

Our little drama was nearing its end, I could sense it. One of them would have to make a move. I hoped fervently that whoever nerved himself, or herself, first wouldn't bungle it. Of the three of us it wouldn't have been possible to choose the most excited.

Friday night they had company and played cards until almost three. If he could get her drunk enough, it would be a cinch to have her fall in the tub, I thought. For some reason the thought persisted that he'd drown her in the bathtub. Saturday morning Harry looked bad, deep circles under his eyes, and red, puffy cheeks like he always got after a beer or two.

"Good party?" I asked cheerfully.

"Great. No one could see the cards after midnight. Made eighteen dollars."

"How's Ellen feeling?"

"Mean as hell. Left her dozing at the table waiting for the coffee to perk. She'll probably scald herself with it. Just don't bother her today unless you want your head chewed off."

So it was today! I was humming to myself as he walked away. Me bother Ellen on this, the most important day of her life? Not likely. Not at all likely.

At lunch time I burned all the practice signatures I had worked on so hard for the past weeks. I

took the will, nodded satisfaction with it and placed it in the envelope. I locked it in the safe out front. The envelope was authentically beat up looking, addressed to me by Harry and even postmarked last August. He had bought me a gag card in Chicago while they were up there for their annual weekend vacation, but he forgot it until they got back home, so he mailed it here. All afternoon I hummed that song, *Everything's Coming Up Roses.*

Harry got home at his usual time and went straight to the elevator without a glance toward me. It worried me a little that he overlooked such an obvious thing. He should have thought about little things like that. I hoped he wouldn't forget anything even more important.

It was about fifteen minutes later that I heard the siren. It was a neat job after all; I shouldn't have wasted my time worrying about Harry. He told me his story brokenly the next day.

"My God, Mattie, I blame myself! I knew she was half asleep when I left. I just didn't think of the coffee boiling over. It's my fault."

"Harry, Harry," I managed through my tears. "It happens. You've got to go on. You can't help her now. It was an accident."

He broke down completely then and sobbed a little. "If I'd just thought. If I'd just turned the gas off. If only she woke up a little."

"There, there," I soothed. "You come in my place and have a cup of tea with me. We'll both feel better for it." I didn't even empty the cash drawer, but started wheeling myself across the dingy lobby. I looked up at him gratefully when he began to push the chair.

We had our tea and Harry talked a little more about how sorry he was and how he would miss her. He thanked me for backing up his story with the police. I was dying to ask if she was already dead before he left for work, but naturally you just don't ask a new widower a thing like that. My guess is that she was so stewed that she might as well have been dead. He got her out to the kitchen table and watched the coffee boil over messing up the burner good, made sure the door to the hall was tight and the gas full on. He probably paced in the bedroom a little while just to make sure, and after a bit he didn't have to worry about it, and went to work. It shouldn't have taken long in the small eight by ten kitchen.

While he talked I eased myself from the awkward wheel chair to the stool I used in my place. It was a low stool on wheels that rolled over the floor as quiet and easy as an electric wheel chair I saw once on television. My wheel chair couldn't get in and out of the small inside doorways of the apartment. Harry was surprised when I stood up to get the sugar for him. "You can do when you have to," I said dryly, not adding at what cost.

forced myself to stand ever so often, just so I wouldn't forget how.

The police looked into it more than they would if there hadn't been the money, but in the end they gave it up. The funeral was on Monday and on Tuesday Harry went to the bank to straighten things out. Thank heaven, they had a joint account so there wasn't any red tape at the bank. I ordered a blackberry pie from the bakery and when Harry came home I invited him in for pie and coffee. I was afraid to wait; he had the look of a man ready to start traveling.

"Oh," I couldn't hide my disappointment when he refused. I had counted so much on his accepting. He seemed impatient to get away and I thought fast. "Well, suppose you take a piece up with you and have it later. I got a whole pie and it will go bad before I can eat it all. I'll get some for you." I could see the refusal forming on his lips so I turned and started wheeling fast across the lobby. At my door I turned again and saw that he was leafing through the magazine I had put down. I was back with a third of the pie before he got tired of waiting and I breathed a sigh of relief when he tossed the magazine down and took the covered plate.

"Don't get taken in by that junk, Mattie," he warned indicating the *Road to Health* magazine. Then he was gone.

I had a fairly busy evening, closing at nine, as usual. Back in my room I divided the rest of the pie, putting a small piece on a second plate and covering it with a towel letting a little bit of the juice soak in. I got out the old coffee can with the powdered poison that I'd had for years and I put about half of what was left of the blue stuff in a paper cup, and put it on a tray with the pie. I flushed the rest down the toilet and cleaned the can. I even put coffee into it and returned it to the shelf before I lay across my bed and waited for three o'clock.

For weeks I almost forgot the pain of my legs and back in thinking about it, and yet when the time came I was nearly too weak to finish it. I sat on the little stool just outside my door and the other side of the lobby looked a mile away. It was an old converted office building with one of those lobbies like a dark cave. I hadn't thought about how I was going to cross all that empty space with the tray on my lap. I never used the stool outside my own place where the walls were close enough to touch and push against. I felt like crying, I was so afraid I couldn't make it. Then I thought of the magazine under my pillow, and I remembered the money, and I knew I could. I had to. It was a nightmarish trip pushing myself along the wall, to my own magazine stand, around it to the wall again and finally to the elevator. The tray kept slipping and the stool seemed unaccountably

hard to control. I leaned against the elevator wall as it screamed its way to the second floor. I never realized how loud it was before. I dared not let it return to the first floor for fear of being stranded there, so I put it on lock and prayed that no one came in that late at night. I balanced the tray carefully and felt for the keyhole, the gloves I was wearing and the stiffness of my cold fingers working against me the whole time. I'd had a key to their apartment for eight or nine years. Ellen gave it to me after locking herself out half a dozen times. "I know you won't ever break in," she had laughed. I wished she could see me then.

The door opened quietly and I closed it just as quietly. The apartment was deathly still and panic nearly made me turn and speed back to my own room. Then I saw him, or rather, I saw his hand. There was a light on in the bedroom and he lay half in and half out as if he had tried to get to the wall phone in the kitchen. He hadn't made it. Seeing him like that seemed to calm me down. I guess I had been afraid it might not have worked and that he might come in and find me. I turned away from him and found the light switch on the kitchen wall. At least I didn't have to worry about being seen from the street or something like that. All the kitchens were on the inside, away from the windows.

The remains of the pie was on the table with the fork on the plate. He hadn't bothered to cut it, but had eaten it all. There was very little left on the plate, a few pieces of broken crust was all. I put the dish I carried up in its place and remembered to wash the fork, being careful not to clean off his fingerprints. Then I smeared it again with the good juice and messed up the piece of pie as if he had been eating at it. I took his coffee cup to the sink where I sifted out a little of the roach killer in it. I had to pour a little more coffee into it to dissolve the stuff, but after that I couldn't even see it. I looked around for the towel I had covered his pie with and finally found it on the floor on the other side of the table. I dropped its replacement there in the same spot and put the first one on the tray along with the remains of the poisoned pie. That left only the contents of the paper cup to be taken care of. There was still quite a bit in it and it had to be spread in the cabinet. I put the cup on the counter and slowly, agonizingly, pulled myself upright, ignoring the tears that formed in my eyes. I had to hold to the counter with one hand while I scattered the powder on the shelf above the cups. I knew those cabinets, knew of the crack right in the middle of every shelf. I pulled it apart just enough to let some of the stuff sift through to settle on the dishes under it and then I sank back down to the stool, too blinded by my tears to see if

the cups had been hit. It was no longer important. I had to get back to my room before I passed out.

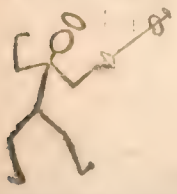
It was nearly five when I fell into bed. I opened the stand at eight, as usual.

Oh, they poked about. More than they did the other time. They analyzed the pie and the dried scum in the cup. One sergeant wanted to get tough with me, but his lieutenant said, "Are you nuts? Her doctor said she hasn't walked in twenty years. Forget it." Eighteen actually, but I didn't correct him. Not since I was twenty-two. That was right after I had produced the envelope with the will. The sergeant didn't believe a word I said, but he wasn't allowed to do anything but glower. Most of the fuss was over whether it was suicide or accident. Mrs. O'Daniels' story about the roaches seemed to clinch the accident, and that was that.

It seems much more distant than it really is, but with each passing mile it fades out a little more. They both got what they deserved. They would have thrown the money away, both of them. By the time I reach Arizona it will all be like a bad dream and I'll be able to forget them. Arizona. Paradise Springs. It will take time—and money, but I have both now. Doctor David can cure me. I know it; it's been my dream every night for so long, ever since I first saw his face looking at me from that magazine page. This isn't one of those so called miracle healers, not Doctor David. He's different. I've studied his face until I know him better than myself, and he can cure me! "Come to Paradise Springs! Let me help you find the cure!" His eyes shine with secret knowledge and power and I know he has the secret.

I smile down at the magazine in my lap, into his beautiful eyes and my heart whispers over and over, "I'm coming, David. I'm coming. . . ."

NEW DEPUTY CIA DIRECTOR



Major General Marshall S. Carter, onetime director of the executive office of the Secretary of Defense under the late General George C. Marshall and member of the United States delegations at the United Nations and at other international conferences, has been named deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency. General Carter will be operating manager of the agency under John A. McCone's direction and will represent the agency on the United States Intelligence Board, representing the intelligence chiefs of all the national security agencies. Mr. Allen Dulles, in addition to representing the CIA on the Board, also served as Chairman; Mr. McCone, while serving as chairman, will sit on the Board not as the representative of the CIA but as the representative of President Kennedy.

the case of the remarkable worm

by . . . August Derleth

"Ah, Parker!" exclaimed my friend Solar Pons, the consulting detective, as I walked into our quarters at 7B Praed Street late one mid-summer afternoon in the early years of the century's third decade, "you may be just in time for another of those little forays into the criminological life of London in which you take such incomprehensible delight."

"You have taken a case," I said.

"Say, rather, I have consented to an appeal."

As he spoke, Pons laid aside the pistol with which he had been practising, an abominable exercise which understandably disturbed our long-suffering landlady, Mrs. Johnson. He reached among the papers on the table and flipped a card so that it fell before me on the table's edge, the writing up.

"Dear Mr. Pons,

"Mr. Humphreys always said you were better than the police; so if it is all right I will come there late this afternoon when Julia comes

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Anthony Boucher points out, in his foreword to THE REMINISCENSES OF SOLAR PONS (1961, Mycroft & Moran) how Pons, in contrast to Holmes, is not a man of the 19th Century foreshadowing the 20th but, instead, "a man of the Twentieth Century recalling the Nineteenth." It is perhaps true that there is a faintly self-mocking twinkle in Pons; this can be why he has become so widely known and liked. . . .

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and tell you about it. The doctor says it is all right with Mr. P., but I wonder.

"Yours resp., Mrs. Flora White."

Pons regarded me with a glint in his eye as I read it.

"A cryptogram?" I ventured.

Pons chuckled. "Oh, come, Parker, it is not as difficult as all that. She is only agitated and perhaps indignant."

"I confess this is anything but clear to me."

"I do not doubt it," said Pons dryly. "But it is really quite simple on reflection. She makes reference to a Mr. Humphreys; I submit it is that fellow Athos Humphreys for whom we did a bit of investigation in connection with that little matter of the Penny Magenta. She wishes to consult us about a matter in which a doctor has already been consulted. The doctor has not succeeded in reassuring her or allaying her alarm. She cannot come at once because she cannot leave her patient alone. The patient, therefore, is at least not dead. She must wait until Julia comes, which will be late this afternoon; it is not amiss, therefore, to venture that Julia is her daughter or at least a school-girl, who must await upon dismissal of classes before she can take Mrs. White's place and thus free our prospective client to see us.

"Since it is now high time for her to make an appearance, she has probably arrived in that cab which has just come to a stop outside."

I stepped to the window and looked down. A cab was indeed standing before our lodgings, and a heavy woman of middle age was ascending the steps of Number 7. She was dressed in very plain house-wear, which suggested that she had come directly away from her work. Her only covering, apart from an absurdly small feathered hat, was a thin shawl, for the day was cool for August.

In a few moments Mrs. Johnson had shown her in, and she stood looking from one to the other of us, her florid face showing but a moment's indecision before she smiled uncertainly at my companion.

"You're Mr. Pons, ain't yer?"

"At your service, Mrs. White," replied Pons with unaccustomed graciousness, as his alert eyes took in every detail of her appearance. "Pray sit down, and tell us about the little problem which vexes you."

She sat down with growing confidence, drew her shawl a little away from her neck, and began to recount the circumstances which had brought her to our quarters. She spoke in an animated voice, in a dialect which suggested not so much Cockney as transplanted provincial.

She explained how she "says to Mr. 'Umphreys," and he "says to me to ask his friend, Solar Pons; so I done like he said," as soon as

her niece came from school. Pons sat patiently through her introduction until his patience was rewarded. He did not interrupt her story, once she began it.

She was employed as a cleaning woman at several houses. This was her day at the home of Idomeno Persano, a solitary resident of Hampstead Heath, an expatriate American of Spanish parentage. He had bought a house on the edge of the heath eleven years before, and since that time had led a most sedentary life. He was known to frequent the heath in the pursuit of certain entomological interests. As a collector of insects and information pertinent thereto, he was attentive to the children of the neighborhood; they knew him as a benign old fellow, who was ever ready to give them sixpence or a shilling for some insect to add to his collection.

Persano's life appeared to be in all respects retiring. Judging by what Mrs. White told in her rambling manner, he corresponded with fellow entomologists and was in the habit of sending and receiving specimens. He had always seemed to be a very easy-going man, but one day a month ago, he had received a post-card from America which had upset him very much. It had no writing on it but his name and address, and it was nothing but a comic picture card. Yet he had been very agitated at receipt of it, and since that time he had not ventured out of the house.

Mrs. White had been delayed in coming to her employer's home on this day; so it was not until afternoon that she reached the house. She was horrified to discover her employer seated at his desk in an amazing condition. She thought he had gone stark mad. She had striven to arouse him, but all she could draw from him was a muttered few words which appeared to be "the worm—unknown to science." And something about "the dog"—but there had never been a dog in the house, and there was not now. Nothing more. He was staring at a specimen he had apparently just received in the post. It was a worm in a common match-box.

"Och, an 'orrible worm, Mr. Pons. Fair give me the creeps, it did!" she said firmly.

She had summoned a physician at once. He was a young *locum tenens,* and confessed himself completely at sea when confronted with the ailing Persano. He had never encountered an illness of quite such a nature before, but he discovered a certain paralysis of the muscles and came to the conclusion that Persano had had a severe heart attack. From Mrs. White's description, the diagnosis suggested coronary trouble. He had administered a sedative and had recommended that the patient be not moved.

Mrs. White, however, was not

satisfied. As soon as the doctor had gone, she had consulted "Mr. 'Umphreys," with the result that she had sent the note I had seen by messenger. Now she was here. Would Mr. Pons come around and look at her employer?

I could not refrain from asking, "Why did you think the doctor was wrong, Mrs. White?"

"I feels it," she answered earnestly. "It's intuition, that's what, sir. A woman's intuition."

"Quite right, Mrs. White," said Pons in a tolerant voice which nettled me the more. "My good friend Parker is of that opinion so commonly held by medical men, that his fellow practitioners are somehow above criticism or question by lay persons. I will look at Mr. Persano, though my knowledge of medicine is sadly limited."

"And 'ere," said our client, "is the card 'e got."

So saying, she handed Pons a colored postcard of a type very common in America, a type evidently designed for people on holiday wishing to torment their friends who are unable to take vacations. It depicted in cartoon form a very fat man running from a little dog who had broken his leash. The drawing was bad, and the letter legend was typical: "Having a fast time at Fox Lake. Wish you were here." The obverse bore nothing but Persano's address and a Chicago postmark.

"That is surely as innocuous a communication as I have ever seen," I said.

"Is it not, indeed?" said Pons, one eyebrow lifted.

"I could well imagine that it would irritate Persano."

"'Upset' was the word, I believe, Mrs. White?"

"That he was, Mr. Pons. Fearful upset. I seen 'im, seein' as how 't was me 'anded it to 'im. I says to 'im. 'Yer friends is havin' a time on their 'oliday,' I says. When 'e seen it, 'e went all white, and was took with a coughin' spell. 'E threw it from him without a word. I picked it up and kep' it; so 'ere 'tis."

Pons caressed the lobe of his right ear while he contemplated our client. "Mr. Persano is a fat man, Mrs. White?"

Her simple face lit up with pleasure. "That 'e is, Mr. Pons, though 'ow yer could know it, I don't see. Mr. 'Umphreys was right. A marvel 'e said yer was."

"And how old would you say he was?"

"Och, in 'is sixties."

"When you speak of your employer as having been 'upset,' do you suggest that he was frightened?"

Our client furrowed her brows. "'E was upset," she repeated doggedly.

"Not angry."

"No, sir. Upset. Troubled, like. 'Is face changed color; 'e said something under 'is breath I didn't 'ear;

'e threw the card away, like as if 'e didn't want ter see it again. I picked it up and kep' it."

Pons sat for a moment with his eyes closed. Then he took out his watch and consulted it. "It is now almost six o'clock. The matter would seem to me of some urgence. You have kept your cab waiting?"

Mrs. White nodded. "Julia will be that anxious."

"Good!" cried Pons, springing to his feet. "We will go straight back with you. There is not a moment to be lost. We may already be too late."

He doffed his worn blue dressing-gown, flung it carelessly aside, and took up his Inverness and deer-stalker.

Throughout the ride to the scene of our client's experience, Pons maintained a meditative silence, his head sunk on his chest, his lean fingers touching at their tips where his hands rested below his chin.

The house on the edge of Hampstead Heath was well isolated from its neighbors. A substantial hedge, alternating with a stone wall, ran all around the building, which was of one storey, and not large. Our client bustled from the cab, Pons at her heels, leaving me to pay the fare. She led the way into the house, where we were met by a pale-faced girl who was obviously relieved to see someone.

"Been any change, Julia?" asked Mrs. White.

"No, 'm. He's sleeping."

"Anybody call?"

"No, 'm. No one."

"That's good. Yer can go 'ome now, that's a good girl."

Turning to us, our client pointed to a door to her left, "In there, Mr. Pons."

The light of two old-fashioned lamps revealed the scene in all its starkness. Mrs. White's employer sat in an old Chippendale wing chair before a broad table, no less old-style than the lamps which shed an eerie illumination in the room. He was a corpulent man, but it was evident at a glance that he was not sleeping, for his eyes were open and staring toward the curious object which lay before him—an opened match-box with its contents, which looked to my untutored eye very much like a rather fatter-than-usual caterpillar. A horrible smile —the *risus sardonicus*—twisted Persano's lips.

"I fancy Mr. Persano is in your department," said Pons quietly.

It took but a moment to assure me of what Pons must have suspected. "Pons, this man is dead," I cried.

"It was only an off-chance that we might find him alive," observed Pons tranquilly. He turned to our client and added, "I am afraid you must now notify the police, Mrs. White. Ask for Inspector Taylor at Scotland Yard. Say to him that I am here."

Mrs. White, who had given forth but one wail of distress at learning

of her employer's death, rallied sufficiently to say that there was no telephone in the house. She would have to go to a neighbor's.

The moment our client had gone, Pons threw himself into a fever of activity. He took up one of the lamps and began to examine the room, dropping to his knees now and then, scrutinizing the walls, the book-shelves, the secretary against one wall, and finally the dead man himself, examining Persano's hands and face with absurd care.

"Is there not a peculiar color to the skin, Parker?" he asked at last.

I admitted that there was.

"Is it consistent with coronary thrombosis?"

"It isn't usual."

"You saw that faint discoloration of one finger," continued Pons. "There is some swelling is there not?"

"And a slight flesh wound; yes, I saw it."

"There is some swelling and discoloration of exposed portions of the body surely," he went on.

"Let me anticipate you, Pons," I put in. "If the man has been poisoned, I can think of no ordinary poison which would be consistent with the symptoms. Arsenic, antimony, strychnine, prussic acid, cyanide, atropine—all are ruled out. I am not prepared to say that this man died of unnatural causes."

"Spoken with commendable caution," observed Pons dryly. "I submit, however, that the evident symptoms are inconsistent with coronary thrombosis."

"They would seem so."

With his Pons appeared to be satisfied. He gave his attention next to the table before which Persano's body sat. The surface of the table was covered with various objects which suggested that Persano had been in the process of trying to identify the remarkable worm when he was stricken. Books on entomology and guides to insect-life lay open in a semi-circle around the opened match-box with its strange occupant; beyond, in the shadow away from the pool of light from the lamp on the table, lay a case of mounted insects in various stages of their evolution from the larval through the pupal. This too, suggested that Persano was searching for some points of similarity between them and the specimen unknown to science.

I reached out to take up the match-box, but Pons caught my arm.

"No, Parker. Let us not disturb the scene. Pray observe the discarded cover of the box. Are there not pin-pricks in it?"

"The creature would need air."

Pons chuckled. "Thank heaven for the little rays of humor which your good nature affords us!" he exclaimed. "The worm is dead; I doubt that it ever was alive. Besides, the parcel was wrapped. Let us just turn the cover over."

He suited his actions to his words.

It was at once evident that the pin-pricks spelled out a sentence. Together with Pons, I leaned over to decipher it.

"Little dog catches big cat."

I flashed a glance at Pons. "If that's a message, certainly it is in code."

"Surely a limited message, if so," demurred Pons.

"But it is nothing more than child's play," I protested. "It can have no meaning."

"Little, indeed," agreed Pons. "Yet I fancy it may help to establish the identity of the gentleman who brought about Idomeno Persano's death."

"Oh, come, Pons, you are having me!"

"No, no, the matter is almost disappointingly elementary," retorted Pons. "You know my methods, Parker; you have all the facts. You need only apply them."

With this he came to his knees at the wastebasket, where he sought diligently until he found a box six inches square, together with wrapping paper and cord.

"This would appear to be the container in which the worm arrived," he said, examining the box carefully. "Well filled with packing, so that the specimen should not be jolted, I see. Does that convey nothing to you, Parker?"

"It is the customary way of sending such specimens."

"Indeed." He looked to the wrapping. "The return address is plainly given. 'Fowler. 29 Upper Brook Street.' Yet it was mailed in Wapping, a little detail I daresay Persano overlooked. Some care for details is indicated. Fowler will doubtless turn out to be a known correspondent in matters entomological, but most definitelty not the source of this remarkable worm."

At this moment Mrs. White returned, somewhat out of breath. At her heels followed the young *locum tenens* she had evidently gone to fetch after telephoning Scotland Yard; and, bringing up the rear, came Inspector Walter Taylor, a feral-faced young man in his thirties who had more than once shown an unusual aptitude for the solution of crime within his jurisdiction.

With his arrival, the Inspector immediately took charge, and soon Pons and I were on our way back to 7B Praed Street, Pons bearing with almost gingerly care, with Inspector Taylor's permission, a little parcel containing the extraordinary worm which had sent Idomeno Persano to madness and death.

In our quarters once more, Pons carefully uncovered the remarkable worm and placed it, still in its match-box, under the light on his desk. Thus seen, it was truly an imposing sight. It was furred, like a caterpillar, but also horned, like some pupal stages, with not one horn, but four, one pair rising from the back close to its head, the other facing the first pair, but rising from

the other end of the worm. Its head was bare of fur and was featured by a long proboscis, from which uncoiled a slender, thread-like tongue. It appeared to have no less than four rows of feet, double rows extending all the way up, as multitudinous as those of a centipede, and very similar in construction. Double antennae rose from back of its head, reaching to the height of the horns, while its tail was thick and blunt. It was perhaps four inches in length, and at least two inches in diameter.

"Have you ever seen its like before?" asked Pons delightedly, his eyes twinkling.

"Never. How could I, if even science does not know it?"

"Ah, Parker, do not be so ready to take someone's word for such a judgment. There is no such thing, technically, as a worm unknown to science. Any worm discovered by a scientist can be readily enough classified, even if not immediately identified with precision."

"On the contrary," I retorted with some spirit. "It lies before us."

"Let me put it this way, Parker—if the worm is unknown to science, there is no such worm."

"I'm afraid we are reversing roles, Pons," I said with asperity. "Is it not you who scores me constantly for my didacticism?"

"I am guilty of the charge," he admitted. "But in this case, I must give you no quarter. This worm is unknown to science for precisely the reason I have stated—there is no such worm."

"But it lies here, refuting you!"

"Pray look again, my dear fellow. I submit that the head of this interesting creature is nothing less than the head of a sphinx moth—commonly known also as a hawk moth or humming-bird moth—quite possibly the common striped sphinx, *Deilephila lineata*. The elaborate legs are nothing more than complete centipedes commonly found in the northern part of North America, *Scutigera forceps*. The antennae apparently derive from two sources—the furred pair suggest the *Actias Luna*, or common Luna moth; the long, thin green pair are surely those of *Pterophylla camellifolia*, the true katydid. The fur is as equally a fabrication, and the horns—ah, Parker, the horns are little masterpieces of deception! This is a remarkable worm indeed. How closely did you examine the wound in Persano's finger?"

"I examined it with my customary care," I answered somewhat stiffly.

"What would you say had caused it?"

"It appeared to be a gash, as if he had run his finger into a nail, or a splinter, though the gash was clean."

"So that you could, if pressed, suggest that Persano had come to his death by venom administered through a snake's fang?"

"Since my imagination is somewhat more restricted, of scientific

necessity, than yours, Pons," I began, but he interrupted me.

"Like this," said Pons.

He seized hold of a tweezers and caught the remarkable worm of Idomeno Persano between them. Instantly the four horns on the creature's thick body shot forth fangs; from two of them a thin brown fluid still trickled.

"Only one of these found its mark," said Pons dryly. "It appears to have been enough." He gazed at me with eyes twinkling and added, "I believe you had the commendable foresight not to include snake venom in that list of poisons you were confident had not brought about Persano's death."

For a moment I was too nonplussed to reply. "But this is the merest guesswork," I protested finally.

"You yourself eliminated virtually all other possibilities," countered Pons. "You have left me scarcely any other choice."

"But what of the dog?" I cried.

"What dog?" asked Pons with amazement he did not conceal.

"If I recall rightly, Mrs. White said that Persano spoke of a dog. A dog's tooth might well have made that gash."

"Ah, Parker, you are straying afield," said Pons with that air of patient tolerance I always found so trying. "There was no such dog. Mrs. White herself said so."

"You suggest, then, that Mrs. White misunderstood her employer's dying words?"

"Not at all. I daresay she understood him correctly."

"I see. Persano spoke of a dog, but there was no dog," I said with a bitterness which did not escape Pons.

"Come, come, Parker!" replied Pons, smiling. "One would not expect you to be a master of my profession any more than one would look to me as a master of yours. Let us see how skillfully this is made."

As he spoke, he proceeded with the utmost care to cut away the fur and the material beneath. He was cautious not to release the spring again, and presently revealed a most intricate and wonderfully-wrought mechanism, which sprang the trap and forced the venom from small rubber sacks attached to the fangs by tubes.

"Are those not unusually small fangs?" I asked.

"If I were to venture a guess, I should say they belonged to the coral or harlequin snake, *Micrurus fulvius,* common to the southern United States and the Mississippi Valley. Its poison is a neurotoxin; it may have been utilized, but certainly not in its pure state. It was most probably adulterated with some form of alkaloid poison to prolong Persano's death, and complicate any medication Persano may have sought. The snake belongs to the proteroglyphs, or front-fanged

type of which cobras and mambas are most common in their latitudes. The 'worm' was designed to spring the fangs when touched; it was accordingly well packed so that its venom would not be discharged by rough handling in transit." He cocked an eye at me. "Does this deduction meet with your approval, Parker?"

"It is very largely hypothetical."

"Let us grant that it is improbable, if no more so than the worm itself. Is it within the bounds of possibility?"

"I would not say that it was not."

"Capital! We make progress."

"But I should regard it as a highly dubious method of committing murder."

"Beyond doubt. Had it failed, its author would have tried again. He meant to kill Persano. He succeeded. If he tried previously to do so, we have no record of it. Persano was a secretive man, but he had anticipated that an attempt would be made. He had had what was certainly a warning."

"The post-card?"

Pons nodded. "Let us compare the writing on the card with that on the wrapping of the package."

It required little more than a glance to reveal that the script on the wrapping of the package which had contained the lethal worm was entirely different from that on the post-card. But if Pons were disappointed, he did not show it; his eyes were fairly dancing with delight, and the hint of a smile touched his thin lips.

"We shall just leave this for Inspector Taylor to see. Meanwhile, the hour is not yet nine; I shall be able to reach certain sources of information without delay. If Taylor should precede my return, pray detain him until I come."

With an annoyingly enigmatic smile, Pons took his leave.

It was close to midnight when my companion returned to our quarters. A fog pressed whitely against the windows of 7B, and the familiar sounds from outside—the chimes of the clock a few streets away, the rattle of passing traffic, the occasional clip-clop of a hansom cab—had all but died away.

Inspector Taylor had been waiting for an hour; I had already shown him the remarkably ingenious instrument of death designed by the murderer of Idomeno Persano, and he had scrutinized the post-card, only to confess himself as baffled as I by any meaning it might have. Yet he had an unshakable faith in my companion's striking faculties of deduction and logical synthesis and made no complaint at Pons' delay.

Pons slipped so silently into the room as to startle us.

"Ah, Taylor, I trust you have not been kept waiting long," he said.

"Only an hour," said the Inspector.

"Pray forgive me. I thought, insofar as I had succeeded in identi-

fying the murderer of Idomeno Persano, I might trouble also to look him up for you."

"Mr. Pons, you are joking!"

"On the contrary. You will find him at the 'Sailor's Rest' in Wapping. He is a short, dark-skinned man of Italian or Spanish parentage. His hair is dark and curly, but showing grey at the temples. He carries a bad scar on his temple above and a little retracted from his right eye. There is a lesser scar on his throat. His name is Angelo Perro. His motive was vengeance. Persano had appeared against him in the United States a dozen years ago. Lose no time in taking him; once he learns Persano is dead, he will leave London at the earliest moment. Come around tomorrow, and you shall have all the facts."

Inspector Taylor was off with scarcely more than a mutter of thanks. It did not occur to him to question Pons' dictum.

"Surely this is a somewhat extraordinary conclusion even for you, Pons," I said, before the echo of Taylor's footsteps had died down the stairs.

"You exaggerate my poor powers, Parker," answered Pons. "The matter was most elementary, I assure you."

"I am afraid it is quite beyond me. Consider—you knew nothing of this man, Persano. You made no enquiries. . . ."

"On the contrary, I knew a good deal about him," interrupted Pons. "He was an expatriate American of independent means. He dabbled in entomology. He lived alone. He had no telephone. He was manifestly content to live in seclusion. Why? —if not because he feared someone. If he feared someone, I submit it is logical to assume that the source of his fear lay in the United States."

"But what manner of thing did he fear that he could be upset by this card?" I asked.

Pons tossed the card over to me. "Though it may tell you nothing, Parker, manifestly it conveyed something to Persano."

"It could surely not have been in the address. It must be in the picture."

"Capital, capital!" cried Pons, rubbing his hands together. "You show marked improvement, Parker. Pray proceed."

"Well, then," I went on, emboldened by his enthusiasm, "the picture can hardly convey more than that a big fat man is running away from a little dog who has broken his leash."

"My dear fellow, I congratulate you!"

I gazed at him, I fear, in utter astonishment. "But, Pons, what other meaning has it?"

"None but that. Coupled with the suggeston of the holiday which appears in the commercial lettering, the card could readily be interpreted to say: 'Your holiday is over. The dog is loose.' A fat man

running to escape a dog. Persano was corpulent."

"Indeed he was!"

"Very well, then. The post-card is the first incidence of a 'dog' in the little drama which is drawing to a close at Inspector Taylor's capable hands in Wapping. Mrs. White, you recalled to my attention only a few hours ago, told us that her late employer muttered 'the dog' several times before he lapsed into silence. That was the second occurrence. And then, finally, this match-box cover announces 'Little dog catches big cat.' My dear fellow, could anything be plainer?"

"I hardly know what to say. I have still ringing in my ears your emphatic pronouncement that there was no dog in the matter," I said coldly.

"I believe my words were 'no such dog.' Your reference was clearly to a quadruped, a member of the Canis group of Carnivora. There is no such dog."

"You speak increasingly in riddles."

"Perhaps one of these clippings may help."

As he spoke, Pons took from his pocket a trio of clippings cut from *The Chicago Tribune* of seven weeks before. He selected one of them and handed it to me.

"That should elucidate the matter for you, Parker."

The clipping was a short news-article. I read it with care.

"Chicago, June 29: Prisoners paroled from Ft. Leavenworth yesterday included four Chicagoans. They were Mao Hsuieh-Chang, Angelo Perro, Robert Salliker, and Franz Witkenstein. They were convicted in 1914 on a charge of transporting and distributing narcotics. They had served eleven years. Evidence against them was furnished by a fifth member of the gang known as 'Big Id' Persano, who was given a suspended sentence for his part in their conviction. 'Big Id' dropped out of sight immediately after the trial. The four ex-convicts plan to return to Chicago."

Two of the convicts were pictured in the article; one of them was Perro. Pons must have made the rounds of hotels and inns in Wapping, showing Perro's photograph, in order to find him at the Sailor's Rest.

"I take it 'Big Id' is our client's employer," I said, handing the clipping back to him.

"Precisely."

"But pray tell me, how did you arrive at Perro as the murderer?"

"Dear me, Parker, surely that is plain as a pikestaff?"

"On the contrary. I should have looked to the Chinaman. The device of the worm is Oriental in concept."

"An admirable deduction. Quite probably they were all in it together and the worm was the work of the Chinaman. But the mur-

derer was Perro. I fear your education in the Humanities has been sadly neglected.

"The card, which was postmarked but two days after this item appeared in the papers, was an announcement from a friend of Persano's to tell him that the 'little dog' was free. The 'little dog' undoubtedly had information about Persano's whereabouts, and knew where to find him, even if Persano perhaps did not realize how much of his life in London was known in America. Persano understood the card at once.

"Had Perro not wished Persano to know who meant to kill him, I might have had a far more difficult time of it. 'Little dog catches big cat.' Perro was a little man. Persano was big. Perro is the Spanish for dog. It should not be necessary to add that Persano is the Spanish for Persian. And a Persian is a variety of cat.

"An ingenious little puzzle, Parker, however elementary in final analysis."

NEXT MONTH

THE LIAR

by *WILLIAM FAULKNER*

MURDER MASQUERADE

by *LAWRENCE TREAT*

THE SHERIFF OF GULLMORE

by *MELVILLE DAVISSON POST*

THE MELANCHOLY JOURNEY OF MR. TEAL

by *LESLIE CHARTERIS*

and

FATAL FACSIMILE

A NEW STORY by FREDRIC BROWN

—in the September issue of THE SAINT MYSTERY

the slane mystery

by . . . Edgar Wallace

THE KILLING of Bernard Slane was one of those mysteries which delight the press and worry the police. Mr. Slane was a rich stockbroker, a bachelor and a good fellow. He had dined at a Pall Mall club and, his car being in the hands of the makers, he took a taxicab and ordered the driver to take him to his flat, which was in Albert Palace Mansions. The porter of the mansions had taken the elevator to the fifth floor at the time Mr. Slane arrived.

The first intimation that there was anything wrong was when the porter came down to find the taxi driver standing in the hall, and asked him what he wanted.

"I've just brought a gentleman here—Mr. Slane, who lives at Number Seven," said the driver. "He hadn't got any change so he's gone in to get it."

This was quite likely, because Slane lived on the first floor and invariably used the stairs. They chatted together, the porter and the driver, for some five minutes, and then the porter undertook to go up

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Edgar Wallace, who died in 1932, was a man of enormous and unflagging energy. Author of more than 150 novels (of which as many as five million copies would be sold in a year), Wallace was once quoted as telling a London audience: "I like to write stories which contain nothing more than a little innocent murdering."

FROM: THE LAW OF THE THREE JUST MEN
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and collect the money for the fare. Albert Palace Mansions differed from every other apartment house of its kind in that, on the first and the most expensive floor, there was one small flat consisting of four rooms, which was occupied by Slane.

A light showed through the transom, but then it had been burning all the evening. The porter rang the bell and waited, rang it again, knocked, without, however, getting an answer. He returned to the cabman,

"He must have gone to sleep—how was he?" he asked.

By his question he meant to inquire whether the stockbroker was quite sober. It is the fact that Slane drank rather heavily and had come home more than once in a condition which necessitated the help of the night porter to get him to bed.

The cabman, whose name was Reynolds, admitted as much as, and probably more than, was good for him. Again the porter attempted to get a reply from the flat, and, when this failed, he paid the cabman out of his own pocket two shillings and sixpence.

The porter was on duty all night, and made several journeys up and down his shaft. Through the open grille on the first floor he commanded a view of No. 7. His statement was that he saw nothing of Mr. Slane that night, that it was impossible for the stockbroker to have left the building without his seeing him.

At half-past five the next morning a policeman patrolling Green Park saw a man sitting huddled up on a garden chair. He was in evening dress, his attitude so suspicious that the policeman stepped over the rails and crossed the stretch of grass which intervened between the pathway and the chair, which was placed near a clump of rhododendrons. He came up to the man, to find his fears justified. The man was dead; he had been terribly battered with some blunt instrument, and a search of the pockets revealed his identity as Bernard Slane.

Near the spot was an iron gateway set in the rails leading to the Mall, and the lock of this was discovered to be smashed. Detectives from Scotland Yard were at once on the spot; the porter of Albert Palace Mansions was questioned; and a call was sent round, asking the driver Reynolds to call at the Yard. He was there by twelve o'clock, but could throw no light on the mystery.

Reynolds was a respectable man without any record against him, and was a widower who lived over a garage near Dorset Square, Baker Street.

"A most amusing crime," said Leon Gonsalez, his elbows on the breakfast table, his head between his hands.

"Why amusing?" asked George.

Leon read on, his lips moving,

a trick of his, as he devoured every printed line. After a while he leaned back in his chair and rubbed his eyes.

"It is amusing," he said, "because of the hotel bill that was found in the dead man's pocket."

He put his finger on a paragraph and Manfred drew the paper towards him and read:

> "The police discovered in the right hand pocket of the murdered man's overcoat a blood-stained paper which proved to be an hotel bill, issued by the Plage Hotel, Ostend, on August 3rd, 1921. The bill was made out in the name of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbraham and was for 7,500 francs."

Manfred pushed the paper back.

"Isn't the mystery why this half-drunken man left his flat and went back to Green Park, some considerable distance from Albert Palace Mansions?" he asked.

Leon, who was staring blankly at the farther wall, shook his head slowly; and then, in his characteristic way, went off at a tangent:

"This new law prohibiting the publication of details in divorce cases is something of a bore," he said. "Fortunately, the date is 1921, and the circumstances which surrounded the visit of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbraham to the Plage would have been given the fullest publicity if the case had come into court."

"Do you suspect a murder of revenge?"

Leon shrugged his shoulders and changed the subject.

George Manfred used to say that Leon had the most amazing pigeonhole of a mind that it had been his fortune to meet with. Very seldom indeed did he have to consult the voluminous notes and data he had collected during his life, and which made one room in that little house uninhabitable.

There was a man at Scotland Yard, Inspector Meadows, who was on the friendliest terms with the three. It was his practice to smoke a pipe, indeed many pipes, of evenings in the little Curzon Street house. He came that night, rather full of the Slane mystery.

"Slane was a pretty rapid sort," he said. "From the evidence that was found in his house, it is clear that he was the one man in London who ought not to be a bachelor if about two dozen women had their rights! By the way, we've traced Mr. and Mrs. Wilbraham. Wilbraham was of course Slane. The lady isn't so easy to find; one of his pick-ups, I suppose."

"And yet the only girl he was willing to marry," said Gonsalez.

"How did you know that?" asked the startled detective.

Leon chuckled.

"The bill was obviously sent to give the husband evidence. The husband, either because he was

willing to give his wife another chance or because he was a Roman Catholic, did not divorce her. Now tell me"—he leaned forward over the table and beamed on the detective—"when the cabman drew up before the door of Albert Palace Mansions, did Slane immediately alight?—I can tell you he didn't."

"You've been making inquiries," said the other suspiciously. "No, he waited there. The cabman, being a tactful individual, thought it best to keep him inside until the people who were in the hall had gone up in the lift—which is visible from the door."

"Exactly. Was it the cabman's idea or Slane's?"

"The cabman's," said Meadows. "Slane was half asleep when the cabman pulled him out."

"One more question: when the elevator man took this party to the fifth floor, did he come down immediately?"

The inspector shook his head.

"No, he stayed up there talking to the tenants. He heard Slane's door slam, and that was the first intimation he had that somebody had come in."

Leon jerked back into his chair, a delighted smile on his face.

"What do you think, Raymond?" He addressed the saturnine Poiccart.

"What do you think?" said the other.

Meadows looked from Poiccart to Gonsalez.

"Have you any theory as to why Slane went out again?"

"He didn't go out again," said the two men in unison.

Meadows caught George Manfred's smiling eyes.

"They're trying to mystify you, Meadows, but what they say is true. Obviously he did not go out again."

He rose and stretched himself.

"I'm going to bed; and I'd like to bet you fifty pounds that Leon finds the murderer tomorrow, though I won't swear that he will hand him over to Scotland Yard."

At eight o'clock next morning, when, with a cigarette in his mouth, Reynolds, the taxi driver, was making a final inspection of his cab before taking it out for the day, Leon Gonsalez walked into the mews.

Reynolds was a man of forty, a quiet, good-looking fellow, refined of speech and courteous in a particularly pleasing way.

"You're not another detective, are you?" he asked, smiling ruefully. "I've answered as many foolish questions as I care to answer."

"Is this your own cab?" Leon nodded to the shining machine.

"Yes, that's mine," said the driver. "Cab-owning is not the gold mine some people think it is. And if you happen to get mixe

up in a case like this, your takings fall fifty per cent."

Very briefly Leon explained his position.

"The Triangle Agency—oh, yes, I remember: you're the Four Just Men, aren't you? Good lord! Scotland Yard haven't put you on the job?"

"I'm on the job for my own amusement," said Leon, giving smile for smile. "There are one or two matters which weren't quite clear to me, and I wondered if you would mind telling me something that the police do not seem to know."

The man hesitated, and then:

"Come up to my room," he said, and led the way up the narrow stairs.

The room was surprisingly well furnished. There were one or two old pieces, Leon noticed, which must have been worth a lot of money. On a gate-legged table in the centre of the room was a leather hatbox, and near the table a suitcase. The cabman must have noticed his eyes rest on these, for he said quickly:

"They belong to a customer of mine. I'm taking them to the station."

From where he stood, Leon could see they were addressed to the Tetley cloak room to be called for; he made no comment on this, but his observation evidently disconcerted his host, for his manner changed.

"Now, Mr. Gonsalez, I'm a working man, so I'm afraid I can't give you very much time. What is it you want to know?"

"I particularly wish to know," said Leon, "whether the day you brought Slane to his house had been a very busy one for you?"

"It was fairly profitable," said the other. "I have already given the police an account of my fares, including the hospital case—but I suppose you know that."

"Which hospital case was this?"

The man hesitated.

"I don't want you to think I'm boasting about doing a thing like that—it was just humanity. A woman was knocked down by a bus in Baker Street: I picked her up and took her to the hospital."

"Was she badly hurt?"

"She died." His voice was curt.

Leon looked at him thoughtfully. Again his eyes roved to the suitcase.

"Thank you," he said. "Will you come to Curzon Street to-night at nine o'clock? Here's my address." He took a card from his pocket.

"Why?" There was a note of defiance in the voice.

"Because I want to ask you something that I think you'll be glad to answer," said Leon.

His big car was waiting at the end of the mews, and he set it flying in the direction of the Walmer Street Hospital. He learned there no more than he expected, and re-

turned to Curzon Street, a very silent and uninformative man.

At nine o'clock that night came Reynolds, and for an hour he and Leon Gonsalez were closeted together in the little room downstairs. Happily, Meadows did not consider it necessary to call. It was not until a week afterwards that he came with a piece of information that surprised only himself.

"It was rather a rum thing—that cabman who took Slane back to his flat has disappeared—sold his taxicab and cleared out. There's nothing to associate him with the murder or I should get a warrant for him. He has been straightforward from the very first."

Manfred politely agreed. Poiccart was staringly vacant. Leon Gonsalez yawned and was frankly bored with all mysteries.

"It's very curious," said Gonsalez, when he condescended to tell the full story, "that the police never troubled to investigate Slane's life at Tetley. He had a big house there for some years. If they had, they couldn't have failed to hear the story of young Dr. Grain and his beautiful wife, who ran away from him. She and Slane disappeared together; and of course he was passionately fond of her and was ready to marry her. But then, Slane was the type who was passionately fond of people for about three months, and unless the marriage can be arranged instantly the unfortunate girl had very little chance of retrieving her character.

"The doctor offered to take his wife back, but she refused, and disappeared out of his life. He gave up the practice of medicine, came to London, invested his savings in a small garage, went broke, as all garage proprietors do unless they're backed with good capital, and having to decide whether he'd go back to the practice of medicine and pick up all that he'd lost in the years he'd been trying to forget his wife, he chose what to him was the less strenuous profession of cab driver. I know another man who did exactly the same thing: I will tell you about him one of these days.

"He never saw his wife again, though he frequently saw Slane. Reynolds, or Grain, as I will call him, had shaved off his moustache and generally altered his appearance, and Slane never recognized him. It became an obsession of Grain's to follow his enemy about, to learn of his movements, his habits. The one habit he did discover, and which proved to be Slane's undoing, was his practice of dining at the Real Club in Pall Mall every Wednesday evening and of leaving the club at eleven-thirty on those occasions.

"He put his discovery to no use, nor did he expect he would, until the night of the murder. He was driving somewhere in the north-

west district when he saw a woman knocked down by a motor bus, and he himself nearly ran over the prostrate figure. Stopping his cab, he jumped down and, to his horror, as he picked her up, he found himself gazing into the emaciated face of his wife. He lifted her into the cab, drove full pelt to the nearest hospital. It was while they were in the waiting room, before the house surgeon's arrival, that the dying woman told him, in a few broken, half delirious words, the story of her downward progress. . . . She was dead before they got her onto the operating table—mercifully, as it proved.

"I knew all this before I went to the hospital and found that some unknown person had decided that she should be buried at Tetley and had made the most lavish arrangements for her removal. I guessed it before I saw Grain's suitcase packed ready for that tragedy. He left the hospital, a man mad with hate. It was raining heavily. He crawled down Pall Mall, and luck was with him, for just as the porter came out to find an empty taxi, Grain pulled up his machine before the door.

"On the pretext of a tire burst he stopped in the Mall, forced open one of the gates that led to the park, and waited until no pedestrian was in sight before he dragged the half-drunken man into the gardens. . . . He was sober enough before Grain finished his story. Grain swears that he gave him the chance of his life, but Slane pulled a gun on him, and he had to kill him in self-defense. That may or may not be true.

"He never lost his nerve. Reaching his cab without observation, he drove to Albert Palace Mansions, waited until the lift had risen, and then ran up the stairs. He had taken Slane's bunch of keys, and on the way had selected that which he knew would open the door. His first intention was to search the flat for everything that betrayed the man's association with his wife; but he heard the porter up above saying goodnight and, slamming the door, raced downstairs in time to be there when the man reached the ground floor."

"We're not telling the police of this, of course?" said Manfred gravely.

Poiccart at the other end of the table burst into a loud guffaw.

"It's so good a story that the police would never believe it," he said.

AN EDITORIAL ASIDE

Edgar Wallace and E. Phillips Oppenheim were, each in their way, interpreters of an era which seems singularly peaceful to us in these days when the urge to senseless giggling violence is so much a part of our nights and of our fears . . . Each, in their way, were chroniclers of ways of life which seem strange to us in these more hurried and harried times, but Wallace's approach to Society was markedly not shared by the older man who had made the interpreting of the manners and the mores of The Few his own particular mission—and his career. Consciously? Perhaps not at first, not any more than any half-dozen writers you can think of who will write, time after time, about personalities or circles which you will want to read more about.

How accurate was Oppenheim?

More than you may realize, if you keep in mind the times in which he wrote and that, as the eventually self-appointed rapporteur of a way of life which the First World War was to deal a serious blow to and the Second World War come close to destroying, Oppenheim, if you strip away the surface coating (and the touches demanded by the editors *he* dealt with . . .), was writing about people who could face the world around them, in 1908 or a generation later, in a way denied to others for whom traditions and manners were only words . . .

Mind you, possession of these—the memory of a past and the ability to face the present with a smile—is not unique to the circles about whom he wrote with increasing authoritativeness. And we who live in the cities—we who live in the shadow of the violence in our streets whether the city be London or New York or Stockholm or any city you mention, have a tendency to forget at times that there are still people out there, in the sunlight, people who have not surrendered to this sickness which this magazine has no intention of either glorifying or "selling". . . .

But to turn to other matters—we bring you this month stories by Edgar Wallace and E. Philips Oppenheim, both great names in this field; THE CASE OF THE REMARKABLE WORM, another Solar Pons pastiche by August Derleth; Hal Ellson's haunting NOTHING IS SIMPLE; Kate Wilhelm's THE BENEFICIARY; and the late William O'Farrell's A PLAGUE OF PIGEONS.

It is difficult to realize that Bill O'Farrell *is* also gone.

One after another, these men and these women who in their time shared with us their laughter and their tears, and something of their understanding of what makes man so strong—and so weak, pass on to whatever reward is reserved for those who, in their lives, have contributed something to our memories as a race and to our legacy to Tomorrow.

The shame of it is that so often we must add that this having happened we do not remember these women who chose not to labor with their hands but with their hearts and their minds—we forget them.

We forget them and, in forgetting them, forget the men and the women who have made us laugh and look about us with clearer eyes.

It is not good that we should do so.

Let us, therefore, not forget writers such as Bill O'Farrell. These are *our* legacy to our Tomorrows. . . .

HANS STEFAN SANTESSON

a plague of pigeons

by . . . William O'Farrell

. "Pigeons?"

"Not pigeons, Eric. Only one of them. Apparently a male. A beautiful bird, blue-gray in color and with bright red feet," Horace Bennet said.

Dr. Prince studied him thoughtfully. Bennet was fifty-five, eighteen years older than himself. He was, accordingly, from both a physical and mental point of view at a critical period of life. Furthermore, until his retirement six months before, he had been a prodigious worker. Under his management Bennet Appliances had grown from a small machine shop at the start of World War II into a privately owned industry that netted him an annual half-million dollars. An active man turned suddenly into an idle one is like a car to which power brakes have too abruptly been applied. It often skids. And yet, to outward appearance, his host was a realist without an aberrant brain cell in his head.

"Curious. Almost unbelievable in fact," the doctor said. "Suppose you tell me more about it, Horace? And

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William O'Farrell, author of many novels including GYPSY GO HOME (Gold Medal) and of stories in SMM such as DEATH AMONG THE GERANIUMS (April 1962), etc., was a man with a rare gift for seeing into the minds of the people about whom he wrote and with an approach to life which, in its honesty, was unique in these times.

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don't forget that I've known Audrey all my life."

"Whereas I am relatively a newcomer?" Bennet rose impatiently from his chair. The house was an old-fashioned one and the men were in a glassed-in room which once was called a sunroom. He crossed to one of the many windows and looked out at the garden. "I can assure you that the length of time you know a person has little connection with how well you know her. Or him. I had a younger brother, Richard—"

He broke off, turned quickly to glance at the staircase through the open door. "Did you hear something?"

"What did it sound like?"

"A flutter. Like a fluttering of wings?"

"I heard nothing. You were speaking of your brother—?"

"Yes, Richard. When he was sixteen—on the morning of his sixteenth birthday—Richard complained of having been unable to sleep the night before. A disgusting odor had kept him awake. According to him, although no other member of the family could detect it, the odor still persisted."

"Olfactory hallucination?"

"They would probably call it that today," Bennet agreed. "But a scientific label doesn't make an obnoxious odor less distasteful. This particular hallucination became so intense that, had he not been placed in restraint, my brother would have cut his nose off. He was still in a disturbed state when he died. I was very close to Richard. But until the morning of his sixteenth birthday even I did not suspect—"

Again he was silent, staring uneasily in the direction of the staircase. "So you see, Eric, why the fact that you have known my wife longer than I have leaves me unimpressed," he said at last. "And I understand you haven't seen her for some months?"

"True. Not since the wedding." The doctor cleared his throat. "Do you know of any other similar cases in your family?" he asked. "Or in Audrey's family?" he added quickly, prompted by the older man's quick, penetrating glance.

"None. You're familiar with Audrey's background. Perfectly normal. So is mine. I say that with conviction because Richard's affliction was originally physical, the result of a nearly fatal accident when he was learning to walk. He fell downstairs and banged his head."

"I see. That's all?"

Bennet shrugged. "I can vaguely remember, as a child, hearing about some uncle who died of alcoholism, but that's hardly a family record of insanity."

The doctor winced. "I deplore that word. Psychiatrically speaking it is meaningless."

"I deplore it, too, but probably for a different reason," Bennet said. "Let's get down to essentials. I want

Audrey cured of—of this obsession. There must be a place somewhere—"

Prince raised an interrupting hand. "First I would have to be convinced that she's in need of therapy," he said. "Frankly it seems most unlikely. The whole thing does. Couldn't there be some simple explanation? Suppose, for example, there should turn out to be a dovecote in the neighborhood—"

"There is one," Bennet sighed. "Young Tommy Reynolds raises homing pigeons. Lives just up the road. I've checked with him. His birds are all accounted for. I'm afraid there is no—as you put it—simple explanation."

Dr. Prince got up. "If that's true—and, mind you, I say *if*—I know an excellent place up-State. A private hospital, The Pines, about fifty miles from here. Dr. Ferguson. I can recommend him highly. Experienced and—I'm sure you'll consider this important—tactful." He paused, frowning. "But I don't like it, Horace. You realize that, if Audrey should become a patient there, she would not be allowed to leave at will?"

Bennet nodded. "I understand the procedure. I've had some experience. And I assure you that I like it even less—"

He stopped, hearing a footstep on the stairs. "Hello, Audrey. Thought you were asleep," he said.

Audrey Bennet came lightly across the living room and through the sunroom door. "I was. My pigeon woke me, cooing at the window. It's been a long time, Eric." She extended an exquisite hand to Dr. Prince. "What are you doing here?"

"Just trying to drum up business," he told her, smiling. "It's obvious I shan't find any here." He looked at her admiringly.

So did her husband. To Horace Bennet, Audrey personified beauty, character and, although she was thirty-five, all the warm concomitants of youth. Her dark brown eyes suggested hiding places reserved for amusing secrets only, and were in startling contrast to the simple, almost too casual arrangement of her pale blonde hair.

He said, with studied lightness, "The pigeon woke you up again? We'll have to do something about that bird."

She laughed. "I'm on my way to do it right this minute. Don't go, Eric, before I come back."

She left the sunroom. A moment later both men heard the front door shut. Another moment, and they saw her through the window. She was entering the garden. The fading summer sunlight seemed to cast a halo about her head. She waved to them. The waving hand held a small, brightly colored cardboard box.

"Cracker Jack," Bennet whispered. The whisper contained a moan-like quality. "She says her

pigeon loves the stuff. Now watch—"

Eric Prince was doing that already. Bennet, standing beside and slightly behind him, could see that the doctor's attention had been tensely fixed.

"You see? Does that convince you?" Bennet still spoke softly, as though afraid of being overheard. "There was an actor once, an Englishman. A skilled pantomimist. Famous for it, many years ago. Can't recall his name—"

"David Garrick?"

"Could have been. Anyway there's a story that, once at a party, he put on a little act. Pantomimed holding a baby in his arms. Baby was non-existent, naturally, but he talked to it, probably hummed a little lullaby. Carried it to an open window to show it something in the street below. Stumbled and dropped the baby out of the window, and then all hell broke loose. Men cursed and women screamed. Some fainted. Maybe a half-minute passed before they realized that it had only been an act. Must have been because he hadn't had a baby to begin with. But a few seconds before everybody could have sworn they'd seen one. Just as, if I didn't know better, I could almost swear that right now I'm watching Audrey feed candied popcorn to a pigeon . . ."

The whisper had gathered volume. He spoke now in a normal tone. He spoke to himself, however, rather than to Dr. Prince, having more than half-forgotten the latter's presence. He watched his wife discard the empty box and encourage an invisible or, at best, a very shadowy pigeon—but was the pigeon shadowy? Wasn't an avian outline gradually growing more substantial?—to peck the remaining contents from her hand. He put clenched fists before his eyes to blot out sight, and turned away.

"Sometimes I'm afraid that I'm the one who's seeing things," he said. He went over to his former chair and, a little shakily, sat down. "Eric, are you sure you didn't hear a fluttering sound a while ago?"

"Quite sure, Horace." The doctor was still looking out the window.

"Last night something cooed outside the door of the bedroom. It woke me but Audrey slept right through it," Bennet said. He raised an anguished face. "Tell me the truth. You were watching. Did you or did you not see my wife feeding Cracker Jack to a blue-gray pigeon with red feet?"

Slowly the doctor turned back into the room. He was frowning. "A difficult question. Probably much more complicated than you realize," he said. "What is reality? Well, it means different things to different—"

"No doubletalk, please. I want the simple truth. Did you see the pigeon?"

"Let's put it this way," Prince

said hesitantly. "I saw a pigeon, but whether or not it was blue-gray and—"

"It's true, then," Bennet broke in before the younger man had finished. "It's true, and I'm going to wind up in a straitjacket just as Richard did."

"That," Prince told him, "is fantastic. Now look, Horace," he went on, assuming a pseudo-cheerful manner, "I could easily have been mistaken. This late afternoon sunlight can be tricky. It could have been a shadow that I saw."

"You didn't see a shadow." Horace Bennet got up ponderously. There was mounting anger in his face and in his voice. "And you didn't see a pigeon, either, because there wasn't any pigeon. You're lying, Prince! I don't know what sort of stunt you're trying to pull—"

"I'm not trying to pull anything. And may I suggest that you stop shouting, Horace? Audrey's coming back."

Bennet was abruptly silent. He walked over to the window and stood there with his back turned to the room. He gave no evidence of hearing his wife when she came in.

"Well, that job's done!" she said. "It's time for cocktails. Martini, Eric?"

"I'd love one, thanks."

"Same for you, Horace?"

Her husband swung around. His face was red. "Would you like me to have a Martini, Audrey? A whole flock of them, perhaps? Would you like to see me get roaring drunk and die in delirium tremens as my uncle did? Is that what you would like?"

Audrey stared at him, bewildered. "What's happened to you, Horace? Whatever is the matter?"

"It's nothing, Audrey," Eric Prince broke in. "He's just had a slight shock, but he'll get over it. And I don't think I'll have that cocktail, after all. If you don't mind?"

Audrey shrugged. "As you like. I'll go with you to the door," she added as he turned away.

Bennet watched them go. Presently he left the window and followed, well behind but keeping them in sight. Reaching the front door, Audrey pulled it open and smiled at Eric in goodbye. Dr. Eric Prince, the smooth young headshrinker, returned her smile. Bennet, for no specific reason, suddenly was furious. He opened his mouth to shout at him, to order the charlatan from the house.

He did not shout. His mouth stayed open but no sound came from it. Only, as he heard the fluttering of wings, a convulsive and completely silent gasp. His eyes glazed over as a pigeon flew down the staircase and alighted on the rug only a few feet from the couple at the door. It was a brownish pigeon, not the blue-gray bird Audrey had so often and so well described. It strutted arrogantly for

several feet and stopped to peck at something on the floor. Then again it spread its wings, flew between the two calmly talking people and vanished in the thickening dusk outside.

And neither Audrey nor the doctor so much as turned their heads.

Horace Bennet approached them with unaccustomed diffidence. "An oddly colored pigeon, wasn't it?" he said.

Audrey's smile was questioning. "I beg your pardon, dear?"

"A brown pigeon. You didn't see it? It flew between you and Eric, only inches from your eyes."

"Why no, dear. A brown pigeon? Did you see one, Eric?"

Prince shook his head. "Neither brown nor any other color. Forgive me for going professional on you, Horace, but you're not looking well. Been overdoing it a bit?"

"No. Well, maybe. I'm not sure. I don't seem to be entirely sure of anything," Bennet said. "What was the name of that private hospital you were talking about?" he asked.

"The Pines. Run by a man named Ferguson."

"That's it. Call Dr. Ferguson for me, will you, Eric? I think a second professional opinion is indicated," Horace Bennet said.

It was accomplished with mechanical precision. Doctors Prince and Ferguson drew up the commitment papers which, with Bennet's consent, were signed by an ex-member of his firm of legal representatives who happened to be a judge. Before this was done, however, and while still technically competent, Bennet made over a power of attorney to his wife. Audrey drove him up-State personally, and Dr. Ferguson came out of the big, comfortable and definitely non-institutional looking house to welcome him on the broad green lawn. The doctor was flanked by two pleasant, husky young attendants in white uniforms. They waited patiently, while Bennet said goodbye, to help him into the house. Only at the last, as he approached the door, did he seem to hesitate, and then it was too late. The attendants gently but firmly helped him get inside. Audrey played dance music on the radio as she drove home. . . .

Eric was waiting for her in the driveway. So was little Tommy Reynolds, the pigeon fancier. The latter had a complaint to make.

"Mrs. Bennet, ever since I loaned you Brownie the other day he won't eat anything I give him. Keeps flying over here whenever he gets loose. What'd you feed him, anyway?"

"Cracker Jack. He loves it. I'll send you over a carton in the morning. Run along home now, Tommy. I have to talk to Dr. Prince."

When the boy had gone, Eric affectionately took her hands in his. "Was it too terrible, darling?"

"Well, I must admit that it was something of an ordeal. But it had to be done, Eric. We had no choice," she said. "Poor Horace!"

He nodded sympathetically. "Yes, the old boy was rapidly approaching a state of complete hysterical dissociation. We just helped him along a little. Unprofessional, of course, but it would have come to the same thing in the end. Now, let's forget him for a while—be happy."

He kissed her. "Do you realize," he said, "that this is the first time we've seen each other alone, really talked together, since your marriage?"

"I do realize it, dear. Those telephone conversations were so—well, unsatisfactory. Not like this."

"Not a bit like this," he smiled. "We'll wait a little while, then go away. Europe, I think. Just the two of us."

"Three of us," Audrey corrected him. "And come to think of it, going to Europe might not be a good idea. Dislocating, if that's the word I want. What's a homing pigeon, I mean, when he doesn't have a home to fly to?"

"A badly confused bird," Eric said, after a short, thoughtful silence. "Just like me."

Audrey laughed. "Back in a minute, dear." She walked quickly toward the house.

His eyes were slightly narrowed as he watched. As she reached the steps, he saw her stop, raise a gracefully bent wrist toward the railing of the porch. He heard her make soft cooing noises, saw her wrist shake slightly as though something light had landed on it.

Eric's breath caught in his throat. His heart beat wildly. He had distinctly heard a fluttering of wings. . . .

(Continued from p. 104)

Avram Davidson, who has appeared frequently in this magazine, was awarded an Edgar for "the best short mystery story of the year" (not, incidentally, published in SMM). Erle Stanley Gardner, creator of the Perry Mason books, was awarded an Edgar as "a Grand Master of the Mystery" for the whole body of his work. (Previous Grand Master Awards had been made to Vincent Starrett in 1957, to Rex Stout in 1958, and to Ellery Queen in 1960.) Here was of course recognition that was more than justified. On the other hand I must admit to personal disappointment that Edward D. Radin did not win the Edgar for the best fact crime book in 1961 for his superb LIZZIE BORDEN: THE UNTOLD STORY (Simon & Schuster); instead it was awarded to Barret Prettyman's DEATH AND THE SUPREME COURT (Harcourt).

nothing is simple

by . . . Hal Ellson

"Are you sure this will work out?" Vincente asked again.

Arturo watched the road ahead, squinting against the blinding white light of the desert. "You're still worried?" he finally said. "There's no need to be. This will be simple."

Simple? Vincente wondered. Nothing was simple in this life. He knew by experience, by the poverty he'd endured, the lowly work he'd done.

The car sped on away from the hovel where Vincente lived. Ahead lay the city beyond those burned and naked slopes. Vincente shuddered.

"Arturo, take me back," he suddenly cried.

"Are you losing your nerve?"

"Get someone else."

"It's too late now."

"I'll jump from the car."

"No, you won't. Now take it easy. If you can't, think of Rosa. You're doing this for her."

It was the same argument Arturo had used a week ago. It worked again. Vincente quieted, thinking of his desperate condition, the hovel back there where Rosa waited. In a short while that could be

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Hal Ellson's DUKE sold more than a million copies. This is publishing history. But the author of this and of the recent BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS (May 1962, SMM) and WITNESS TO MURDER (Feb. 1959, SMM) and other stories, turns to a different locale in the present story which may remind some of the work of B. Traven. . . .

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changed as if by magic. The car sped on. The intense white light splintered off the road. Vincente closed his eyes. Ai, soon I'll be rich, he thought.

When he opened his eyes again, the car lunged across a concrete bridge that spanned a river-bed where no water had flowed in seven years. "The new bridge," Arturo explained. "Our friend Senor Sanabria built it and charged the city five times what it's worth."

"Five times what it's worth? But how?"

"Ah, Vincente, you know as little as the goats you tend. Senor Sanabria is in with the politicians. It's as simple as that."

"He must be very rich."

"Enough to share with us," Arturo answered, turning the new plaza where half a dozen fountains played in the sun.

Vincente marveled at these and the sights of the city. Five minutes later he sat cold sober in front of the house where the car had stopped. Two huge cypress trees stood like sentinels on the burned lawn. The house was old style colonial, with thick white walls and grilled windows. It dozed in the sun, vacant-looking. The street was deserted.

"All right," said Arturo. "This is the place. You shouldn't have any trouble. Only the lady of the house is home at this hour. Be calm when you come out. Walk to the car."

"But what if the lady doesn't open the safe?"

"Put this to her head and tell her you'll blow her brains out," Arturo said, taking a gun from inside his jacket and handing it over.

"And if she still doesn't open it?"

"She will. Don't worry."

But Vincente was worried. It couldn't be that simple. "Suppose you go in while I wait out here," he said.

"And who will drive the car in case something goes wrong?"

"But you said. . . ."

"There's no time to argue. The maid will be returning from the market, you fool."

Vincente shivered as he passed between the two great cypress trees. The sunlight coming off the walls of the house made him squint. He was breathing hard now, sweat trickled down his thin chest. You fool, he thought, seeing himself reflected in the glass of the door, with the black iron-work segmenting his face. Fool, fool, fool, he cried and the shattered image of himself receded. The door swung open. Face to face he stood with Senora Sanabria, the gun frozen in his hand, arm paralyzed, lips unable to move. He couldn't speak till he saw the terror in the woman's eyes. It was simple then.

He raised the gun, the words came mechanically. Exactly as Arturo had spoken them, they dropped from his lips. Senora Sanabria

obeyed his commands like a sleepwalker, led him upstairs to the safe in the wall, opened it and collapsed in a dead faint.

The thump of her body striking the floor broke the quiet of the house and shattered the odd feeling he had that this venture was no more than a dream. Now he moved quickly, stuffing the money into his shirt. The house was quiet again, terrifying in its silence when he turned around.

He moved toward the door, gained the landing and froze. Footsteps sounded below. A man was ascending the stairs. Halfway up, he stopped, raised his eyes and opened his mouth.

It remained open. Vincente raised the gun and fired. The shot shattered the silence, echoing through the house till he felt the very walls were about to collapse and closed his eyes to the other sound, the terrible thumping on the stairs which would never stop, yet finally did. And now the silence was worse. Rushing out of each room, it swirled around him and held him immobilized. But Arturo was waiting, Rosa. He opened his eyes, saw the man sprawled grotesquely at the bottom of the stairs.

What's he doing there? he wondered and the weight of the gun in his hand brought him back to himself. Panic seized him then, sending him flying down the stairs. The man's mouth was still open as he leaped over him. He fled to the door and again saw himself in the glass as he opened it, his face crisscrossed and fragmented by bars of black iron. The door crashed behind him and he was in the blinding white light of the sun again, running between the cypress trees toward the waiting car. It was already moving. He hurled himself into it and sped off.

The street was stark empty and silent, the houses the only witnesses to their flight. They rounded the corner, another, and moved into a wider street filled with traffic. Arturo's face was still pale, his hands gripped the wheel. "What happened?" he said between his teeth.

"A man came in."

"I know. It was a thousand-to-one."

"Who was he?"

"Senor Sanabria. He came right out of nowhere. What happened in there?"

"He's dead. I killed him," Vincente answered.

"And you got the money?"

Vincente nodded, remembering the scene on the stairs, the sound of the shot echoing throughout the house, the nightmare silence that followed. He groaned aloud, and Arturo smiled.

"What's the matter? Afraid?" he said. "There's no need to be. We're out of it and safe. It was really simple."

Simple? Didn't he realize what had happened? A man lay dead back there in the big house. Was

that simple? Vincente shuddered and shook his head. "Who said we're safe?" he said.

"I do. There were no witnesses."

"The police have a way of finding them."

"They're stupid, all of them. We're out of it. You can believe me."

Vincente said nothing. But he knew now that they themselves were the stupid ones, particularly himself. I killed a man because of him, he thought.

A few minutes later the car stopped in front of the small dingy hotel where Arturo lived. They got out of the car and went up to his room. As soon as they entered it, Arturo asked for the money. Vincente took it from his shirt and dropped it on the bed.

"Well, we're rich," Arturo said after counting it. "Do you realize that? We're rich."

Vincente didn't answer, thinking of the scene on the stairs again, the man with his mouth yawning open, the shattering report of the gun and the dreadful silence that followed the thumping of the dead man's body as it tumbled down the stairs.

Arturo gathered the money together, placed it under the mattress and said, "What about a drink to celebrate?"

"We drink to a murdered man?"

"Oh, come off it. You didn't mean to kill Sanabria. Anyway, it was his own fault!"

"His fault?"

"Of course. He put himself on the spot and what happened happened. It was fate. Now let's get that drink. It'll help your nerves."

"You talk like nothing happened. Don't you feel anything?" Vincente asked.

"I feel rich," Arturo replied, moving toward the door. "Let's go."

Vincente followed him out. The bar across the street was empty. They sat at a table. Arturo ordered tequila for both of them—a drink Vincente could rarely afford. After the third glass, his head began to spin and he could barely see.

A blind harpist came in now and played for them. Over and over again in a cracked voice he sang the ballad of two bandit friends who'd argued and emptied their pistols into each other.

Vincente's head sank to the table. When he lifted it again, the beggar was gone and Arturo was shaking him roughly. "Time to go. You can't sleep here," he said.

They left the place and returned to the hotel room. Vincente's head ached. Otherwise, he'd recovered from the effects of the tequila.

"You're ready to leave?" Arturo said.

"As soon as you give me my share of the money."

"Ah, you didn't forget that," Arturo laughed and lifted the mattress. There was no sign of the money, not a single peso. "It's gone," he cried and with a sudden

movement heaved the mattress off the bed. The spring lay bare from end to end. Both men stared at it, then at each other.

"So?" Vincente finally said.

"Someone was in here and robbed us. The hotel is full of thieves."

"The money. I want the money."

"You want it? What about me? Do you think I planned that job for nothing?"

Vincente felt sick. He'd killed a man. Now this had happened. He'd been duped by his friend. How could he explain this to Rosa? Why had he listened to her in the first place? "Take me home," he said, shaking his head. "I've had enough of this kind of business."

"Whatever you say," Arturo answered.

They went down to the street and got into the car. As it started, Vincente suddenly made an odd request. "Pass the market," he said.

It was out of the way, and Arturo was about to protest, then decided to humor his friend. Five minutes later they arrived at the outskirts of the market where a band of gypsies had set up camp.

"Stop here," Vincente ordered.

Arturo obliged and turned to Vincente. "Well, what now?"

To his surprise, Vincente got out of the car, entered the gypsy camp and returned some minutes later with a young gypsy woman. "She's going to tell your fortune," he explained. "Let her see your hand."

Arturo hesitated, smiled and again obliged. The gypsy woman took his hand and said, "I see you are a very rich man."

"Wrong," Arturo laughed, glancing at Vincente.

"You have much money," the gypsy continued, gripping his fingers and staring at his palm.

"Ah, how much?" said Arturo, still amused. "If you know, surely you can tell me."

Without hesitation the gypsy named the exact sum Vincente had taken from Senor Sanabria's safe. Arturo paled and caught himself. The gypsy had simply guessed this. There was no other explanation. There could be no other, but Vincente had heard and was apt to believe her. He had to act fast and throw her off.

"And just where is all this money?" he asked.

"In the back of your car, under the seat."

"Now that's something," Arturo laughed. "All that money. I wish you were right, but nothing's there. I'm afraid you're not a very good fortune teller."

"It's there," the gypsy said, frowning at his hand and suddenly dropping it.

"Ah, you saw something else. What was it?" Arturo asked.

"It is bad. I cannot tell."

"You'd better if you want your fee."

The gypsy raised her eyes. "You are not going to live very long. That is all I can tell you."

Arturo laughed again. Vincente paid the gypsy, climbed into the car and it moved off. Neither man spoke till it was again racing across the desert.

"Why so quiet, Vincente?" Arturo finally asked.

"I've been thinking."

"About the gypsy? Ah, now, don't tell me you're going to believe her wild guesses?"

Vincente shrugged and stared through the windshield. There was no sign of life in the vast desert area that lay around them. "Stop the car," he said.

"What for?"

"Don't ask questions."

There was a note of command in Vincente's voice. Arturo stopped the car, turned and found himself staring into the barrel of the gun he'd given to Vincente.

"What's this for?" he asked, turning pale.

"You know what it's for. You cheated me."

"Oh, come off it. Did you let that filthy gypsy take you in?"

"No, I let you do that. I was a fool. Now I'm worse. I'm a thief and a murderer because I listened to you."

Arturo opened his mouth, and Vincente fired the gun. Without a second glance for his former friend, he stepped from the car, entered the back and raised the seat. There were tools, inner tubes, but not a single peso of the stolen money. For the moment, he was taken aback. Then he knew. The gypsy had made a mistake. The money was back in the hotel room. He slipped the gun in his pocket, turned away from the car and started walking back to the city.

It was dark when he arrived there, the streets crowded when he reached Arturo's hotel. All he had to do was gain entrance to the room. The money was there. He was certain of that.

As he entered the lobby, he saw the desk-clerk asleep in a chair. Quietly he mounted the stairs and went directly to Arturo's room. He tried the door. To his surprise, it opened. The light was on, a woman sat on the bed. Beside her lay a pile of money. Her long black hair glistened in the light. She did not hear him, did not know he was there, till his hands fastened on her throat.

Vincente went down the stairs. The desk-clerk opened one eye as he passed and went off to sleep again. Outside, the soft night-wind blew across the city. A rocket burst from the main plaza, rose above the dome of the Cathedral and shattered against the dark sky. Another followed it as the band began to play. Vincente paused in front of the hotel to watch the fireworks, to listen to the music.

Ah, Rosa would like this, he thought, seeing her again in the hotel room with the light gleaming on her soft black hair. . . .

blackmailer

by . . . Henry Slesar

CLARA MACK's reading lamp was on when she heard the car stop in front of the house, and, not wanting to give the impression of having waited up for her daughter's homecoming, she flicked it off, dropped the confession magazine to the floor, and went to the bedroom window. She gave her customary sigh of admiration for Jimmy Kimberley's snow-white Oldsmobile, simpered with pleasure at the rustle and swirl of her daughter's gown, and smiled with maternal satisfaction at the height, hauteur, and handsomeness of her escort. It was a sight as gratifying to Clara as the climactic scene of a lavish romantic movie, in Technicolor, reserved seats only.

But when she heard their voices at the front door, the illusion was dispelled; the flat, irritated tones of Louise weren't softened by any violin background.

"I know why you won't come in," she said. "But you needn't worry, Jimmy. She's asleep."

"It's not that," the boy grumbled. "For Pete's sake, Louise, you know I like the old—" He stopped, suddenly interested in the sweatband

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Henry Slesar, who will be remembered for his THE ABSENT-MINDED MURDER (SMM, August 1960) is the author of ENTER MURDERERS (Random House), CRIME FOR MOTHERS (Avon), etc. etc. In the present story the author writes about the sort of people you may have seen on the street the other day. . . .

---

of his hat. "I thought you knew me better than that," he said.

"I thought I did, too. But now I see that I made a mistake. I thought —because you tied your own shoelaces and knew how to feed yourself, I thought you were all grown up. Now I know I was wrong. Good-night, Jimmy."

Her key was in the door, but his hand on her arm made it go clickety-click against the lock. "You cut that out," he said. "That's no way to end an evening."

"Is that all we're ending?"

At the bedroom window, Clara caught the breath she was about to expel. She took two steps back into the room and accidentally kicked an empty beer can that was lying on the rug. She picked it up and hugged it to her ample bosom like a crying child in need of comfort. Then she peered out again, and saw a scene more in keeping with her expectations: the Kimberley boy had her daughter in his arms and was kissing her with thoroughness and finality. Unfortunately, Louise wasn't as impressed; she pushed him away, turned to the door again, and this time managed the intricacies of lock and key without interruption. A moment later, she was in the house, and young Kimberley had slapped his hat on his head and was striding back to his automobile. He made the car door slam louder than the front door of the house, as if having the last audible word.

Clara tiptoed out of the bedroom.

"Louise? Is that you?"

Only footsteps answered. Clara followed them into the kitchen. Her daughter was hanging her wrap over a chair and opening the refrigerator.

"You're just like your father," she clucked. "Every time we had an argument it made him hungry."

Louise poured milk into a glass and brought it to the table. She took a long swallow and then looked up. "I suppose you heard the whole thing," she said.

"Only a few words, honey, you woke me up, you were talking so loud."

Louise looked at the beer can snuggled against her mother's bosom. Clara flushed, and put it on the table. "All right," she said. "You like milk and I like beer, it's a matter of taste, ain't it? Or don't the Kimberleys think so?"

"I'd rather not talk about it, Mother."

"I beg your pardon. But you were already talking about it, weren't you? In front of the whole neighborhood?" Clara sat down and folded her hands on the tabletop. "Listen, Mary Louise Theresa, this isn't the F.B.I. you're talking to, this is your mother. All I want to know is what happened?"

"Nothing happened. It was a wonderful party and everybody had a good time."

"And who was at this wonderful party? Judge Kimberley and his wife, I suppose?"

"They were there."

"And how did they treat you?"

"Mother, you know how Jimmy's parents feel about me."

"Sure, I know." With dignity, Clara pulled the dreary housecoat around her middle. "They think you're a lovely girl with an unfortunate affliction. Me."

"Mother—"

"Listen, for months you've been making it very clear. Only what happened tonight?"

The girl got up, carefully bringing the glass to the sink and rinsing it clean.

"Judge Kimberley talked to me," she said softly. "He was very nice. He is such a dignified old man."

"Hah," Clara said.

"He said that we might have to postpone our plans. He said he wanted us to wait until Jimmy was better established in the firm, that he might even get a partnership in a few years—"

"A few years?"

"Nothing's definite. Nothing but the wait. That's definite."

"And what are they waiting for? Maybe they expect I'll dry up and blow away, like dust?" Clara grunted. "Come to think of it, I do feel pretty dry." She got up heavily and went to the refrigerator for a beer. She punched open the can viciously. "And you fell for that malarkey, I suppose? You just sat there and took it!"

"Mother, please!" There were tears in her voice; a second later they would be in her eyes. She got up, yanking the wrap from the kitchen chair.

"Wait a minute, honey, I didn't mean anything wrong, I never know how to put things—" She moved swiftly to block her daughter's exit. "Louise, don't get mad at me—"

Louise went limp; the wrap trailed to the floor and she let herself be enfolded by her mother's arms. Clara held her gingerly, fearful of mussing the elaborate gown.

"It'll be all right," she said, patting her shoulder. "Jimmy's crazy about you, and that's all that matters. Just because you got a broken-down old mother, that won't stop him from marrying you. Those things don't happen these days."

"It *has* happened," Louise whispered. "I could hardly believe it myself, but it happened. His father won't permit the marriage, and that's all there is to it."

"Honey, I can't believe that!"

"It's true," Louise sobbed. "This —postponement is just an excuse. Jimmy won't do anything his father won't approve of—he said so—"

"And he doesn't approve of me, is that it? Because they think I'm some kind of tramp?"

"I didn't say that."

"But that's what they think. Because I own a red dress and like a

little drink, they made up their mind about me. Listen, you don't have to tell me about that Judge Kimberley, I've seen his type before." Louise looked at her. "Oh, not that way," Clara said hurriedly. "Not in court or anything."

"I'm tired, Mother."

She let her daughter go, but followed her to the bedroom. "Boy, I'd like to tell that Kimberley a thing or two—I'd make that old guy squirm—"

"That won't help."

"You'd be surprised. I could tell him a few things, believe me. I got a good mind to call him up right now—"

Louise stopped and scrutinized her mother's face for a sign of her intentions. Then she seemed satisfied that the threat was empty, and went wearily into the room.

"I mean it!" Clara shouted. "I'd make him think twice, believe me! Louise? Louise, you listening to me?"

There was no answer.

Clara trudged back to the kitchen. The beer can was still on the table. She sat down and finished it moodily.

Louise had already left the house by the time she woke up the next morning; there wasn't even a sign of her hurried breakfast except for the pot of coffee still warm on the stove. Clara poured herself a cup and took it into Louise's bedroom.

First she looked at the gown, hanging forlornly in the closet. Then she went to the bureau, picked up the wilted corsage, the jeweled comb, the long white gloves. Carefully, she slid open the drawer where Louise kept her scrapbook. In the center pages, sandwiched between candid photos of Jimmy Kimberley and her daughter, she found the lengthy news clipping about Judge Kimberley's retirement from the bench. She took it to Louise's bed and read it through. There was a photograph of Kimberley on the page, a stern image, cold-eyed, indomitable. It made her laugh.

"You think you're really something, huh?" she said.

She replaced the clipping and the scrapbook in the drawer, and went to the telephone directory in the living room. She found the number and dialed it.

"Can I speak to Judge Kimberley, please?"

The dress she wore that afternoon wasn't red, but its faded print flowers had scarlet petals, and her picture hat was strewn with red roses. The maid who answered the front door of the Kimberley house seemed noncomittal about the effect when she ushered Clara into the Judge's study.

"Mrs. Mack?" the Judge said, rising from the wing chair near the cold fireplace. "Very nice of you to call on me, Mrs. Mack, I was

hoping we might have a chat someday."

"I thought it was a good idea myself," Clara said boldly.

"I was about to have some tea. Will you join me? I'm sorry Mrs. Kimberley couldn't be here, but she keeps a rather busy schedule. Charity work, you know."

"As a matter of fact, Judge, I'm just as glad we had this chance to be alone."

There was a distinct red tinge to the lean cheeks as the Judge poured the hot brew into tiny cups. He brought one to her, glanced quickly at the flower-garden of a hat, and then looked away. "Well, now," he said. "I suppose you've come to talk about Louise and Jimmy?"

Clara smiled mysteriously. "No, Judge, I didn't come about them. Not exactly them."

"Oh? I would have thought—"

"I know what you thought, Judge, only you're wrong. You see, I know how you feel about their getting married, and I wanted you to know that I understand."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Look, you don't have to put on an act for me. I know you don't want the marriage to take place, and maybe it's just as well. I mean, it might be a little embarrassing—"

"Embarrassing?"

"Yeah, you know. In case they ever found out." She winked broadly. "About you and me."

Kimberley coughed into his tea cup. It rattled loudly against the saucer, and he placed it on the table carefully.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Mack. Did you say, you and me?"

"Sure, Judge." Her eyes widened over the rim of her cup. "Now come on. Don't pretend you don't remember."

"But I don't—"

Clara clucked. "What a dummy I am! Ain't that just like me, Judge? How could I expect you to recognize me *now,* the way I am? I was a whole lot different then, wasn't I? I sure wish I had a picture, but you remember that fire I had in my apartment? No, I guess you don't know about that, it was after we broke up." She smiled coquettishly. "Now come on, Judge, take a good look. You can see a *little* of the old me, can't you?"

He was breathing badly. He peered at the woman's face, his lips trembling.

"You're wrong," he whispered. "I don't know you."

"Try, Judge. Think of Chicago. And that big fat moon over the lake. You were a lot younger then, of course.' She giggled. "And you were cute, too. With your mandolin and everything."

"Chicago," he said hoarsely. "My God, it's an eternity ago . . ."

"But I still remember it, Judge. Every day of it. And every night."

"You're not Lily? You can't be Lily Mangles?"

"Can't I, Judge?" She leaned back, smiling reminiscently. "Lily

was such a pretty name, wasn't it? A whole lot better than Clara. I never told you I was *really* called Clara."

"Lily! My God, I can't believe it—"

"It's true enough," Clara said sadly. "Time ain't been so good to me, and neither was my husband. William Mack, rest his soul, he sure didn't know how to treat a lady. I would have been a lot better off if you'd have married me, Judge. Only I wasn't that kind of girl, was I?" She giggled again. "Not the kind you want to marry."

"Please." Judge Kimberley stood up. "You're talking about something that happened thirty years ago—it's about time we both forgot it."

"Oh, I forgot it, Judge, I never said a word to Louise. But I thought it was time for us to get together again."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. I thought we ought to talk over old times, Judge, you and me and Mrs. Kimberley—"

"My wife doesn't have anything to do with this!"

"No, of course not. I just thought she'd be interested, that's all. It might be good for some laughs—"

"You can't be serious! I won't have you upsetting my wife with this—this ghost story! It has nothing to do with me now. I can't let you—"

"Can't you?"

"I won't!" He was getting purple around the jowls. "For God's sake, Lily, you know my wife never knew about us. It would kill her—"

"She sounds pretty strong to me. Her and her charity work. Well, maybe I could use a little charity myself."

"Is it money you want?" He took a step towards her. "All right. Tell me how much and get it over with."

"Please," Clara said stiffly. "I don't need your money. Mr. Mack left me a nice little insurance policy. All you could do for me now is—well, what you should have done anyway. Make it easier on your son to marry Louise."

"So that's it! Blackmail!"

"Now that's just what I thought you'd say," Clara tittered, wiping her mouth with a napkin. "You call it blackmail when two kids that love each other want to get married? Say, I thought you were supposed to be smart?"

"I'm not preventing Jimmy's marriage. I'm merely suggesting that he wait—"

"Yeah," Clara jeered. "I've heard that one plenty of times. Wait a few years until they're sick of the sight of each other. Wait until you can shuffle him off to Europe for the grand tour. Or meets some girl whose parents you like better—"

The Judge looked like a wounded man back from the front as he returned to the wing chair. He eased himself painfully onto the cushion, and covered his face with one hand.

"This is a terrible thing you're doing, Lily . . ."

"I'm not doing a thing, Judge. I'm just asking you to be reasonable. Fair and reasonable."

The judge was silent.

"All right," he sad finally. "Let me think it over."

The wedding was planned for July. Louise would have preferred June, but there were too many clothes to buy and too many plans to make. Clara rediscovered her ability with needle and thread, and spent two solid weeks changing hemlines and tucking in waists. She saw Judge Kimberley only twice during that hectic period, once at a stiffly formal tea with Mrs. Kimberley, at which she behaved with admirable, lady-like restraint. The other visit was with the Judge alone, the day before the wedding.

"I wanted to talk to you about your plans," the Judge said solemnly. "I'm sure you know what I mean."

"Sure, I know," Clara said. "But you don't have to worry. Your wife will never know about you and me and the old days, I can promise you that."

He sighed. "Don't be too harsh on me, Lily," he said wistfully. "I never meant to treat you so poorly."

"Sure, I know."

"If you need any help, any financial assistance—"

"Oh, I'm all fixed, Judge, like I told you. With Louise off my hands now I can afford something I've always wanted—a nice little house in Florida. I'm signing the papers next week; I'll be moving a couple of months from now."

The Judge sighed again, this time with relief.

"Thank you, Lily," he said gravely. "Thank you for that."

When Clara arrived home in the evening, there was no sign of Louise in the living room or kitchen, and her bedroom door was closed. She walked into the room and found her daughter sitting on the bed, looking at the wallpaper.

"What's the matter, honey?" Clara sat beside her and stroked her hair. "What's eating you?"

"It's nothing, Mother."

"Look, I can see something's wrong—"

Louise turned aside, but not soon enough for Clara to miss the glint of moisture in her eyes. "Hey, what is it?" she said. "You feeling blue? You worried about tomorrow?"

Louise turned back, slowly.

"Mother, there's something I should tell you. I was in the Kimberley house this afternoon, waiting for Jimmy. I was sitting in the little dressing room off the study when you came in with the Judge. I didn't mean to listen in, honest I didn't—"

Clara caught her breath. "You heard us? The Judge and me?"

"I didn't think there'd be anything to overhear. But then—"

"But then you got an earful, huh?"

Louise put her head on the pillow, muffling her face. "How could you, Mother? How could you do such a thing?"

"Do what? What do you think I did?"

"You suppose I don't know? You think it isn't clear how you—blackmailed him?" She glared upwards. "Lily!"

Clara giggled. It was just a small giggle, but it was prelude to a guffaw. She laughed for a full minute, while her daughter sat up and stared at her in bewilderment.

"What is it?" Louise said. "What's so funny?"

"Oh, honey," her mother said. "My name's not Lily. My name's Clara. It's never been anything but Clara."

"But I heard him—"

"Sure, you heard him. But I never saw that man before in my life. I read up on him a little so's I could sound like I did, and I let him do the rest. That's lesson one, honey," she chuckled. "Every man's got *some* woman in his life he'd rather forget. I just let him think I was her. Now dry those tears and let's see about that wedding dress. I don't like the way that right shoulder falls."

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death on the rocks

by . . . Ken Lester

"But he didn't scream," I said.

I paused in my pacing of the lodge to face those remaining in the wake of the coroner, the unaccustomed chill of death only a little dispelled by the afternoon sun of autumn and the maple burls snapping in the massive fireplace.

It had taken me since noon to drive up to the lodge from our public relations office in New York. Blake & Blake. That's us. My wife is the second Blake. She brings a certain eclat to our corporate title and no end of blonde happiness to me.

"Davie," innkeeper Herr Pfeiffer had said on the phone, "We have trouble. Max Kindler fell off the Rock."

Max Kindler, perhaps the world's best rock climber. Dead.

"I'll be there," I'd said.

"And, Davie, Frau Pfeiffer says bring your pretty wife." I had brought Anne.

The constabulary captains and kings of the little mountain town nearby had departed, bearing with them the sheet-swathed body of Max Kindler. They had been kind but brusquely official, unable to mask their impatience with out-

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Anyone mad enough to climb six hundred feet straight up a perpendicular rock slab deserved whatever he got—or so they said after Max Kindler's unexplained death. But why and how had it really happened? Had it been an accident? Or—murder . . . ?

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siders in general, these climbers in particular. Anyone ridiculous enough to climb 600 feet up a perpendicular rock slab deserved whatever he got. A man had fallen to his death this morning? It happens. An expert? Even so. But he was roped to two other climbers at the time? So ropes break—yes, even "full" nylon an inch and a quarter in circumference. Now, unless there was anything else in this accident they'd be getting back and don't hesitate to call on us that's all right lady it's our job that's what we get paid for.

"No, he didn't scream." This was Olga, red-eyed and weeping, her brunette Paris-chic body almost lost in the folds of a leather armchair. She had been number two man on the rope, thirty feet above Max, the third man. "I heard nothing, felt nothing. All of a sudden he was gone."

"I led the climb," said Kurt Ehrlich. He sprawled on the arm of the chair, a bronzed hand on Olga's shoulder consolingly. He was strikingly handsome in a craggy, blond Nordic way. I looked into the hawklike blue eyes and found no quarter. Along with Max he was one of the country's leading climbers, utterly expert and utterly contemptuous of the inexpert.

I knew how he felt. Anne and I were good rock climbers, as amateurs go. We had honeymooned in the British Isles and on the continent; together we had tackled the Grooved Arete at Tryfan, later the Matterhorn and a smattering of lesser monoliths. Well guided, of course. That and an occasional weekend here on the Rock was it. Nothing like Kurt's classic assaults of the Khumbu Icefall into the West Cwm of Everest, but . . .

"Where did Max fall?"

"The Sacred Seventh," Olga said. Rock climbers tag their feats oddly. There were six lesser ways to surmount this slab.

"That's pretty tough for amateurs, but childsplay for Max," I mused. "I'd like to see exactly where he fell. Will you climb with me?"

"No!" blurted Olga.

"Yes," said Kurt at the same time.

"I just couldn't bear to right now," explained Olga, shaking her head.

"How about me?" asked Anne, feeling out of the picture.

I glanced at Kurt who, being the best, would lead. It would be his responsibility. Best leads and is first up, last down on a roped climb.

"What have you climbed?" Kurt asked, not insolently, but searchingly. We told him and he nodded.

"I take you in the morning."

Frau Pfeiffer bustled through and urged us in to dinner. I broke existing records for the mixed doubles thirty-foot dash, while visions of sauerbraten danced in my head.

An icy dawn found Anne and me bumbling about with the indecision of the half-asleep. I had

gone to bed with the problem of how a man dies unnoticed on a rope; it was still there unsolved now.

"I still don't get it," I admitted to the pert blonde I live with. Annie and I were dressing for the climb. Correction. She was dressing, that is, and I was noting her antics with a husband's pardonable prurience.

"How'm I supposed to wear this outsize minnow net?" she asked, struggling with her Brinje. That's a rough cord undervest.

"Steady, girl. That's it. Just like a T-shirt. Next to the skin. Traps air. Keeps you warm."

"There. How do I look?"

"Like a netted mermaid."

"That's bad?"

"That's good. But you want to know something? They should make these with smaller mesh for girls."

Annie checked and blushed in concurrence. I was right. I generally am about small family matters.

"This Max must have been quite a guy," I said.

"You think there was something between him and Olga?"

"I guess. She's genuinely broken up. But it was Kurt's reaction I meant."

"Oh?"

"I asked him what kind of man Max was, and he looked straight through me and said 'Ah, Max! He was a man I would follow to the ends of the earth.' —Oh, help you on with your boots, Cinderella?"

Rock climbers wear various boots to help their feet grab. I had worn rag-soled *scarpetti* in the Dolomites, the Austrian *kletterschuhe* with felt soles, as well as unassuming gym sneakers. I've seen climbers shuck even these, climbing in their stockinged feet. Annie and I both wore stiff leather boots we had treated each other to in the Jungfrau.

After breakfast Kurt gave us a stiff going over: the boots we wore, the way we handled our rope and gear—there are a thousand clues to expertise. We made it. Kurt jerked his head and we followed him along the winding wooded path to the cliff base.

At the foot of the Rock we roped up and got a last-minute briefing from Kurt.

Kurt passed the slick, cool nylon to me, and I relayed it to Anne. The rope is a sacrament that unites a party in more than the physical sense. Joined to another climber his equal, for example, a man can do far harder climbs than either alone. We waist-looped ourselves into the rope, some thirty feet apart.

"We rest halfway. Again at the three-quarter mark," said Kurt. "That is where Max fell."

Amen, I said silently. The first half would be relatively easy, the second half more than twice as hard, by the peculiar mathematics of fatigue.

"I lead. You're two," said Kurt to me merely in confirmation of

our rope positions. "Mrs. Blake three."

I glanced at Anne. Three had been Max's position. She showed no sign of nervousness or superstition as we swung into the initial stages of the climb.

Sacred Seven was vertical and smooth. Handholds were small and few. That's why there were six easier ways to climb the Rock. Kurt knew Sacred Seven like the back of his hand, and he led us with the precision I had expected. Hand- and footholds sprang at us in chesslike sequence. There was no shuffling, no scrambling. One foot went to a higher hold; a little shove from the other leg, we swung up, and the rear leg in turn sought its higher niche.

So it went to the halfway mark. The welcome rest, clinging to our holds in what for me has always been a travesty of relaxation. I'm at home on the rock, but not *that* at home. The morning sun warmed the rock and us as we flogged stiffening muscles, shaming them into lifting us the third quarter of the climb. And rest.

Panting, clinging, resting yet exhilarated by the climb, I gave my mind over to Max's death. For this was where it had happened. But how? Unseen, unheard, unfelt by two others thirty and sixty feet above him, Max had snapped a practically unbreakable nylon rope and plunged still silent to his death on the rockfall at the cliff base.

It was exactly as though Anne—climbing in Max's number three position—were to vanish soundlessly, leaving in my hands only a limp, torn rope.

How sever this synthetic umbilical, how cut the silvery cord of life? How . . .

I heard it. Anne's voice thirty feet below me. It was sheer terror, a panic-fighting, half-whispered scream.

"David!"

"Anne! What's the matter?" I almost fell starting at the sound of her voice.

Instantly from above came Kurt's command: "Stand fast." I felt the rope snap taut as Kurt instinctively took up slack.

"David!" Again, pure edge-of-hysteria terror.

"Anne, what's . . ."

"A snake. —A rattler . . ." Her voice had lessened in volume as —God knows how—she was trying not to panic and so provoke the rattler. "He's a foot from my face."

Fighting panic myself, I moved my left foot toward a lower foothold, only to be brought up short by the taut rope.

"Don't move!" snapped Kurt.

"But, Kurt . . ."

"Listen to me!" His voice crackled in a tone of command I had never heard. "I'm coming down to her. You're on belay—a piton here." A piton, a steel spike driven into a rock crevice. When it pinged

sweetly as you drove it you knew it was sound and firm. I hoped it had pinged sweet as an angel whenever it had been driven. "Keep her talking. Keep talking," he said.

"Anne," I called, as calmly as I could. "Now, listen to me . . ." I don't know what I said in those moments. I guess things that made her answer. I wanted her to know we were with her, that I was on the other end of this silky thread, even if pinned to the rock above with a steel needle, and for the moment could do nothing to help.

She made small sobbing sounds. By straining out against the rope and across the cliff face, I could just glimpse her head. There. It was a rattler all right, and it was less than a foot from her face, coiled on a shallow rock shelf.

Clinging pressed against the slab, there was nothing Anne could do, either to dislodge the snake or to get away. If she fainted. . . . I cautiously pulled in the last inch of slack. The least—and the most—I could do was brace to hold her—in case.

"Steady, girl. Kurt's on the way. He's rappeling . . ." I stopped. Descending *en rappel* is sliding down a rope snubbed against your body to slow your descent. —Rope! It took rope! We had no extra rope for rappeling. Kurt? Where . . .

Then I saw him.

He was picking his way across the sheer rock *unroped!* "Free climb" is the rock climber's phrase. No rope. Just hands, feet, and nerve.

One slip, a bit of crumbling rock —it was 600 feet straight down. Kurt made it look easy, with the grace of consummate skill. His hands rested lightly on the rock, balancing his body away from the slab. His feet he placed firmly and accurately on their rock footholds. It looked effortless and absolutely secure; it seemed impossible that this man could ever fall.

Kurt's easy swinging motion carried him across the rock face toward Anne, clinging to her holds.

"Anne," I kept on, in what I hoped was a calming tone, although I was beginning to feel the strain. My calf muscles screamed protest at the tension. "Don't move or look around. Kurt is down there with you now."

I saw Kurt pause in his traverse, reach behind him for his piton hammer, and slip his wrist through the thong, then inch slowly the remaining distance separating him from Anne.

The snake had rattled intermittently, but now, disturbed by Kurt's approach, began a constant menacing whir. I didn't know what that meant.

Kurt flashed me a glance. I nodded back as if to say I think I know what you want, and count on me. He wanted me to stand by that rope. Strong. He wanted me to keep talking and tell Anne to expect Kurt's swing, but not know exactly when to expect it, on the

premise that no one can keep from flinching. And Anne's flinching would startle the rattler into moving, and Kurt would miss. He would get no second try.

I told her these things. She said she understood. She couldn't see Kurt nor hear him, so silent had been his approach. I couldn't have seen him either if I hadn't strained across and out to watch Anne.

Kurt's arm swung back. His piton hammer flashed in the sun. Anne shrieked as the angered snake struck. Kurt's hammer caught the rattler well back of the head, strong enough to break its back and send it like a convulsing whip flailing through the air.

Anne fainted and sagged hard on the rope. I braced. Kurt teetered, struggling to hold her into the rock. I prayed the piton should hold above me. Finally the vectors reached some sort of balance: the piton and I up, Kurt in, and Anne down.

Neither of us dared move for a moment. Then slowly, scarcely breathing, Kurt maneuvered Anne into a sort of fireman's carry, she slung across his shoulders. Unconscious, Anne was still roped to me. Kurt remained unroped, in effect refusing to add his weight to hers. If he slipped, I could hold Anne. And he—both of us tried not to think about what would happen to him.

I led. As surely yet as quickly as I knew how up the remaining vertical pitch of Sacred Seven, for time was running out for Kurt below. He was drawing on some hidden reserve of superhuman strength to haul Anne straight up the face of the Rock.

Kurt had flung his piton hammer to me. I slammed in every piton I had as I went, and roped in to each needle's eye with Karabiners, carbon steel snap rings.

Finally ten feet remained to go. Five feet. Two feet. I hauled myself over the lip. Scrambling on the gravel flat I belayed the nylon around a smooth boulder and kept it taut as Kurt struggled up.

Long, long minutes past human endurance Kurt's hand appeared on the jagged rock lip.

I kneeled and tugged Anne, inert, to the sweet safety of the horizontal. Only then did Kurt let me give him a hand up to the flat where he fell and lay retching.

I didn't pray. I felt like it but I was too tired to pray. I sprawled on the gravelly, mesa-like mountaintop, one arm flung over Anne should she stir convulsively in her faint.

I raised my head and blinked through the blear of exhaustion at Kurt. I felt a love for this man for giving me back what had been all but taken from me. A love for the man and a great sadness at the cost to him of the deed.

"I owe you her life. No other

man on earth could have done what you did."

"Max would have done it." He fought unsteadily to his feet and stood swaying, peering across the intervening fog of fatigue into my eyes. After a moment he nodded slowly.

"So now you know."

"I know everything but *why,* Kurt," I said.

"She . . . it was always Olga. And for her it was always me—until Max. And then . . . I wouldn't have minded if he could have made her happy. But Max was bad with women. To him Olga was just another . . ." He shrugged.

"I know that you led Max and Olga up Sacred Seven just as you did Anne and me today. You called a rest, unroped yourself, snapped the rope into that piton with a karabiner and went into free climb."

Kurt nodded slowly as though witnessing the act for the first time.

"Unseen from below you climbed unroped across the slab to beyond that granite outcropping and rapidly picked your way down, still unseen, past Olga to where Max rested, roped but slack. Silent and sure as a spider you inched across to where he clung, face pressed to the sheer wall. You paused, looping the thong of your piton hammer about your wrist, knowing you'd need both hands for what was to follow."

Kurt was studying me, and his nod was almost imperceptible this time.

"You stunned Max with the blunt side of your hammer—this hammer . . ."

"I couldn't kill him," said Kurt. "I had to let the rocks do that."

". . . you stunned him and, letting go the hammer handle caught and held Max, sagging, to the rock face as he slumped unconscious."

"I thought for that second I was going with him," said Kurt slowly, reliving the blow. "It would have been better."

"But you caught and held. There was enough slack between Max and Olga that she never felt a tug. Now you belayed the slack rope and eased Max's body away from the slab to hang deadweight against the belay. You had only to saw his rope against the jagged granite; the nylon strands parted, and Max fell."

"He never knew," said Kurt.

"But you knew, Kurt," I said. "And now I know."

"We are the only ones." He smiled and advanced toward me, his surprising bulk menacing with each purposeful step.

I was crouched over Anne as she lay still unconscious between Kurt and the cliff edge, mere feet beyond us.

"You and I," I said, rising. "We're the only ones. Anne knows nothing of this."

"Such a man," Kurt was muttering. "Such a man, Max." I huddled protectively over Anne as Kurt ad-

vanced to me and, unaccountably, passed me squatting there.

"Such a man I could follow to the ends of the earth . . ." He stood, shoulders slumped, at the very brink of the cliff, his stiff climbing boots planted in the treacherous scree.

Anne moaned, stirring feebly.

"She's coming to," I said, crouching beside her. "It's all right. You're all right," I kept saying in the loud voice one uses to address the deaf or the unconscious.

She stirred in my arms and opened her eyes.

"It's all right. You're safe."

A flood of memory and horror engulfed her, and she cowered trembling in my arms.

"Kurt!" I called over my shoulders. "Kurt!" I wheeled about, sweeping the rim of the precipice.

He was gone.

Anne murmured, "Kurt . . . is he . . ."

"Kurt is . . . gone, darling."

"Dead?" she asked, almost whispering, incredulous.

"Yes. He fell helping us."

She wept uncontrollably for long moments.

"He was a very brave man," I went on. "I think Kurt somehow knew he would be trading his life for yours in that split second he unroped to free-climb down to you."

"At least we know now how it happened," Anne sobbed.

"Oh?" I eyed her narrowly.

"The snake . . . Max's death . . ." she said.

"Yes, we know how it happened," I breathed freely again. "And you must tell them that below."

"Did Kurt scream, was it too horrible as he fell?"

"No, he didn't scream at all, darling." I said, helping Anne to her feet for the long, gentle descent along the back path to base.

"What sort of man can *be* that brave," she asked regaining strength and composure with each step toward people and a world both of us knew better than the Rock.

"Such a man," I offered, "as would follow another to the ends of the earth."

COUNTERFEITERS AT NIGHT

The police in Milan, Italy, recently arrested four persons who it was alleged were making souvenir religious medals by day—and counterfeiting money at night.

The counterfeiters, hiding behind the legitimate and, it seems, rather successful daytime production of religious medals, were busy at night turning out five hundred lire (80 cent) pieces which police described as "almost perfect." The news item did not explain how the work was divided, who worked days and who worked nights, or whether these men were so singularly dedicated to their craft that they were working doube-shift. . . .

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what's new in crime

by . . . Stefan Santesson

COMMENTATORS upon the history of our times will no doubt view the story of the life and times of Serge Rubinstein with that curious, almost clinical, detachment with which historians approach the life and range of interests of men such as Stavisky and, for that matter, more recent intruders into the affairs of nations who work in ways which seldom gain them the publicity accorded a Rubinstein. Compared to these—compared, for instance, to the impact upon his times of an Ivar Kreuger—Rubinstein was a singularly unimportant "financial wizard" and still this man, while alive, was unquestionably a symbol to the mass of all that they neither understood nor liked, but knew they hated.

And why? Gene Smith's THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SERGE RUBINSTEIN (Doubleday, $4.50) *is* well-documented and well-researched, but it only begins to answer this question—why this comparatively unimportant man, operating in circles where chicanery was not exactly unknown, was so disliked and even hated; this lonely man who knew only how to buy friendship, who knifed those who

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Mr. Santesson, editor of this magazine since 1956 and former editor, between 1945 and 1952, of the Unicorn Mystery Book Club, continues his column of comments on recent mystery and suspense novels and other material of interest to SMM readers.

---

stuck with him, and who believed in himself and in his destiny with a single-mindedness worthy of another finish.

It is of course not enough to talk of his early ability to fleece people, not only because this was not understood as such in the world in which he found himself but because to do so is to ignore the socio-economic influences upon the son of Dimitri Rubinstein—the Mitka Rubinstein who had come so far, a century too late, in Czarist Russia. And it is to ignore the realities of life in Europe, in the first years after the war—realities which defy academic analysis because there were no rules and there were no precedents, only the law of the jungle, only the reality that it was not necessarily the strongest who survived the ruins. And lived to eat tomorrow . . .

It was a way of life—a civilization, in fact—which collapsed with the rubble in those years; Rubinstein's error was that he carried into his activities in later years, here and abroad, the mores of this jungle in which he had come to early maturity, ignoring—arrogantly, perhaps—the reality that these were other times and other ways. Or at least as far as he was concerned.

Gene Smith's THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SERGE RUBINSTEIN tells the story of this man whom any number of people could have murdered, and whose murderer is still not known. It is a fascinating story, as much for its description of this half-world in which Rubinstein moved and which is all to little known to most—a world which has its own ways. And its own code, if it may be called that. . . . Rubinstein's Napoleonic view of himself—his ability to manipulate people and assets, and assets and people, in a way vouchsafed to few, is a peculiarity of this world which some might say is a social byproduct of these our times. Keeping this in mind, Rubinstein's evasion of Selective Service is on a par with his at times contradictory approach to people—and even to women. Space does not permit, however, a fuller discussion of the book at this time. Read it and then, if it should be necessary, read further on the history of these our times. . . .

Dolores Hitchens' THE ABDUCTOR (Simon & Schuster, $3.50) is a superb study of a group of people—ordinary people, normal people—caught up in the fear created by an apparently successful kidnapping. The mother who knows that it could have been her child—the man who knows with sick certainty that he will never see his wife again—and the kidnapper who knows only that he must strike out and hurt—and hurt—and hurt. . . . Don't miss this!

Frances and Richard Lockridge's AND LEFT FOR DEAD (Lip-

pincott, $2.95) has the familiar deftness expected from the Lockridges who can't be expected to always write about Pam and Jerry North! A girl returns to her Greenwich Village apartment after a month in hospital only to find that she is supposed to be dead, and that she appears to have a past—and apparently not much of a future. Death comes very close to Mary Smith—very, very close. Do read this!

Anthony Morton's IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO HESTER (Doubleday, $2.95) is a story about John Mannering who, for some years, has been viewed with mixed feelings by Scotland Yard. Here Hester Vane, twenty-one and pretty, appears to have murdered a man, and Mannering takes a hand in the events which lead to the identification of the actual murderer, and to other happenings. As usual, the people in the story, the weak and the strong, are credible people who seem to be drawn from real life and if any behave foolishly, they do so in ways which you can understand and sympathize with. It is this gift for handling people which makes this writer, who writes under this and other names, so unique in this field.

By way of contrast we have Patrick O'Malley's THE AFFAIR OF SWAN LAKE (Mill, $2.95), apparently another adventure of what the publishers assure us are "the most amazing, urbane and witty counter-espionage agents in the business" . . .

Are they serious?

This is the story of the frustrating, at Swan Lake in Minnesota, of a plot to tear a hole in that defensive curtain drawn around this country. A number of people including Oliver Olson, Oscar Anderson (*come now!*) and others, including a French chef with a regrettable interest in other matters, are involved in this plot which is brought to nought by Harrigan and Hoeffler—"the incredible Harrigan and Hoeffler" to again quote the publishers (*so true!*)—who do this in ways, and with a gleam in their eyes, that is undoubtedly unique to counter-espionage.

But I am unkind. Don't take this *too* seriously, and you'll enjoy the exploits of these incredible two, agents for the "Old Man" and members of an "organization dedicated to the preservation of our way of life." Hollywood! Don't miss this!

Ronald Barker's CLUE FOR MURDER (Abelard-Schuman, $2.95) is one of those contrived novels which you either greet with rapture and delight—or you don't.

I didn't.

Again I may be unfair, but I was not too happy with this variant on the locked-room mystery which assumes that five patients of what apparently was a rather unpleasant

man both could and would do the things they do herein. . . .

And Stephen Ransome's WITHOUT A TRACE (Doubleday, $2.95) is likewise disappointing. Frank Rand, investigator for the Public Defender's office, has to face the reality that there is something he doesn't know about Holly Porter, the girl he hopes to marry. You will find yourself sympathizing. But you will not hold your breath. . . .

What would *you* do if the world —the safe and placid world you know—suddenly seems to close in about you and you realize there is something you don't know about your husband (or your wife)—something which is leading to blackmail—and perhaps more . . .

How would you behave—not on paper, mind you, but in real life, when someone you love seems to be threatened and there are questions, disturbing and frightening questions, which must be answered and the answers to which can spell heartbreak—and danger to those you love. . . .

Jeremy York's THICKER THAN WATER (Doubleday, $2.95) tells the story of what happens after the message is left for Margaret Royle's husband, "After all, blood is thicker than water." What does this come to mean to them both in the days that follow? Read the novel; you'll like it!

Nancy McLarty's CHAIN OF DEATH (Doubleday, $2.95) brings us to a world of intrigue, treason and death in Central America, but with a deftness, and with an obvious love for the Guatemala where the action happens, which will make you look forward to the author's next books. Colin McLeod, attractive in a fashion that has become strangely unfashionable in these days, comes to Guatemala for a vacation and is caught up in a conspiracy that threatens the peace of these parts. The tempo of the story is light and attractive, and the plot is credible. In other words, do read this!

The Edgars awarded each year by the Mystery Writers of America to writers in the field of crime and detection have, with the passing of the years, come to have a significance—a promotional significance—akin to the Oscars awarded annually in Hollywood.

And reactions are often as mixed.

I must admit that there have been times when I have myself failed to understand the reasoning behind the selection of this book or this story or this program as the best novel or story published during the past year, or the best program inflicted upon a public which, under the influence of TV, has long since forgotten how to read—or how to talk. . . . But one can usually understand the thinking behind the decisions and respect the honesty

of them, even if quarreling with the conclusions . . .

This year, the highest award of all, the Edgar for the best mystery novel published in this country during 1961, was awarded to J. J. Marric's GIDEON'S FIRE (Harper's). J. J. Marric is of course, as the *Publishers' Weekly* was quick to point out, "one of the many pseudonyms of English author, John Creasey."

It is interesting to note that it was not something of a departure for the organization to award the Edgar for the best mystery novel published in this country during the preceding year to an English writer. Charlotte Jay received the award in 1953, Raymond Chandler in 1954, Margaret Miller in 1955, Charlotte Armstrong in 1956, Ed Lacy in 1957, and Stanley Ellin in 1958. Then in 1959 Celia Fremlin became the first of the British writers to be thus recognized, and in 1960 Julian Symons. And now J. J. Marric.

Here was belated recognition of artistry and the unique sensitivity in characterization which had distinguished much of the writing of John Creasey for so many years. His J. J. Marric novels in particular, apart from being beautiful police procedure novels comparable to the earlier Maigret novels, reflect this ability, disturbingly unique in the field, to make his characters have a breathing living quality to them —a compelling quality in the case of the Gideon novels, which not only make you look forward to the next report on the days and on the nights of this very human police official but you find yourself thinking of Gideon, like Maigret, like some of Evan Hunter's people, as people who are very real and far from fictional.

From all of which you may gather that I agreed with the award.

The award for the first novel was another matter. Or seemed so.

The Edgar for the best first mystery novel by an American in 1961 went to Suzanne Blanc for her THE GREEN STONE (again Harper). Alex Gordon's THE CIPHER (Simon & Schuster) had been nominated, also Breni James interesting NIGHT OF THE KILL (Simon & Schuster) and Winfred Van Atta's SHOCK TREATMENT (Doubleday), and others. And that was about it. . . . The fact that this handful—and some few others—represented the new recruits to the field, is of course disturbing if you think back to other years. But while the Suzanne Blanc novel *was* slight, pleasant and sensitive but still slight, it must be remembered that writers such as Fredric Brown in 1947, Thomas Walsh in 1950, Jean Potts in 1954, and Henry Slesar (represented in this issue with a story) in 1959, are numbered among past recipients of the award; there *will* be others.

(please turn to p. 76)

the brotherhood of darkness

by . . . Lee Chaytor

On a dull grey morning in August, a boy was climbing along the rocky shore near the resort town of Torbay in the south of England. He was so busy staring up at a grim old stone building on the edge of the cliffs above him that he missed his footing and stumbled into the foaming surf. To save himself a ducking, he caught at something tumbling and sliding in the water near him. It was a body. . . .

"You'd think that would be enough of a sensation to satisfy the kid," Chief Constable Mellin said bitterly, "but oh, no! He has to make up a tall tale about a hooded figure peering over the stone wall that tops the cliff."

"Just standing and peering, was it?" asked Commissioner Bryce-Leddinghill.

Mellin snorted. "No, sir. According to the kid, it was beckoning—waving, like—to get his attention. And pointing down to where the body was battering among the rocks."

The Commissioner elevated his

Lee Chaytor will be remembered for her earlier stories about Jamie Jarvis, the first psionic detective we've come across, MISS SILLITHORPE'S HOBBY, which appeared in our September 1959 issue, and INFERNAL TRIANGLE, which appeared in our July 1960 issue. Miss Chaytor, who teaches, has long been interested in this subject.

eyebrows. "I see. Waving *and* pointing. Rather active for a figment of the imagination, don't you think?"

Mellin looked uncomfortable. "That bit's beside the point, sir. Like I told you, this isn't the first body we've had to fish out of the bay. It's very bad for the tourist trade. One body, now,—that gives the trippers a bit of excitement; but when they come thick as a school of herring, it's another kettle of fish." Mellin had the grace to exhibit embarrassment. "No puns intended, Commissioner. But the women are afraid to go bathing."

"I can appreciate their point of view," agreed Bryce-Leddinghill ponderously.

"We tie the drownings in with The Brotherhood of Darkness, sir," Mellin continued. "That lot's a good deal too sharp for us. Out of our line entirely, you might say. That's why I've come to New Scotland Yard for help. We've heard you've got a chap named Jarvis who's handled some odd cases. . . ." He paused inquiringly.

It was the Commissioner's turn to look embarrassed. Much as he hated to admit it, he had an uneasy respect for the extraordinary powers of Jamie Jarvis. How that young man achieved his successes, the Commissioner could never figure out, but witnesses usually reliable swore that Jamie had a whole battery of super-normal talents. Telekinesis, precognition, clairvoyance —these were some of the terms used by Lord Chalfont, Bryce-Leddinghill's old friend and Jamie's sponsor in high places.

"I'll get him in here and you can tell him the details," said the Commissioner, and picked up the phone.

Chief Constable Mellin stared at the good-looking, blond young man who entered in response to the summons. He wasn't odd or queer-appearing; in fact, his frank, guileless countenance rather disappointed Mellin, who was hoping for something exotic, on the order of a stage magician. He shook hands, and stared at Jamie as they sat down.

"Like I've been telling the Commissioner," he began awkwardly, "there's a bunch of nuts calling themselves the Brotherhood of Darkness, has taken over an old mansion on the cliffs above Torbay." He shrugged. "At first we weren't too worried. We're a resort town; we get all kinds."

"They've made trouble?" Jamie prodded gently.

"We're not sure," began Mellin; then, realizing how odd that sounded, added defensively, "At first we thought they'd be good for the town. They bought all their supplies from local merchants—wines, meat, fancy condiments. Lots of people in big cars came to stay overnight, or for the week. Then we began to hear reports that some of them never did get back to London. Posted as missing . . . and last month we pulled a body

out of the bay . . . smashed up something awful. And another one two days ago." He grimaced.

"Were you able to trace either of the bodies?" The Commissioner was interested. So far, this was straight police routine, none of what he called spook stuff.

"Yes, sir," Mellin answered gloomily. "The first one, that is. He was a retired businessman with quite a bit of money and no enemies. Seems he made rather a habit of joining queer religious groups in the last few years. He was a widower, and lonely. We think The Brotherhood is responsible for his death, but so far, we haven't been able to pin it on them. The head of the cult—calls himself Brother Mace—says the dead man left the place in good spirits, on his way back to London, the day before the body was discovered in the bay. Real smarmy little chap, is Brother Mace. All grease and jollity."

"Would you say he had the brains to run a racket involving murder, and get away with it, sir?" asked Jamie.

Mellin was surprised. "Now that you mention it, Jarvis, no. Larceny, yes; or a spot of fraud. But I wouldn't have docketed Brother Mace for murder."

The Commissioner had filled his pipe. Now he lit it with great suckings of air, interspersed with the words of his next question. "Any trouble of this sort before The Brotherhood set up shop?"

Mellin pursed his lips. "Very quiet we've been, for a resort, sir. The occasional drunk and disorderly, a fist fight outside a pub of a Saturday night, but never a vicious murder like this since I signed on. And that's been more years than I want to admit."

The Commissioner turned to Jamie. "Chief Constable Mellin and his men have had The Abbey—that's the old stone mansion leased by The Brotherhood—under surveillance for weeks. Ever since the first murder, in fact."

Mellin nodded gloomily. "Not much goes in or out that we don't see. But The Brotherhood is on to us. We've not been able to get so much as a toe inside the door. Now if we were able to place some nice, innocent-appearing plainclothes officer inside The Abbey as a bona fide member of the outfit—" He and the Commissioner stared meaningly at Jamie.

Jamie stood up. "I take it that I am about to volunteer to join the Brotherhood of Darkness. Has anyone a suggestion as to how I get elected? I can hardly ring the doorbell and ask to sign on. If they're crooked, they'll select their pigeons carefully." He waited a minute. "No suggestions? Then I shall have to make inquiries."

Jamie was, at this time, still unsure of his own powers. He followed closely the methods of operation and procedures prescribed

by Scotland Yard. It seemed to the Commissioner, observing with suspicion and impatience, that Jamie deliberately avoided using his extrasensory abilities. He sent out a summons. When Jamie stood before him, the Commissioner asked,

"Have you got any leads on The Brotherhood?"

"No, sir."

The Commissioner permitted himself to be a bit smug. For once he was ahead of his brilliant subordinate. "Well, I have. Joe Harvell, the chap who built that luxury hotel in Mayfair, came in today to report that his young brother is missing. Seems the lad has been running around with some fairly odd types. Last week he slipped away without saying good-bye. Left a note mentioning a "retreat". Joe thought the boy meant some sort of Home Guard maneuvers."

"Retreat is a religious term, I believe, sir."

"I happen to be aware of that, Jarvis," snapped the Commissioner. "I thought of The Brotherhood at once."

"Good thinking, sir," said Jamie sincerely.

The Commissioner stared at him suspiciously for a moment, then growled, "Oh, sit down, Jarvis!" When Jamie obeyed, the Commissioner continued, "Boy Harvell—that's the young man's name—hasn't come back. Joe began to worry. Today he received a call from the manager of the bank that handles the Harvell accounts. Two checks had come in." Bryce-Leddinghill opened a drawer in his desk and took out two checks. He handed them to Jamie, who scrutinized them carefully, whistling at the amounts.

"They cleaned out Boy Harvell's account?"

The Commissioner nodded. "Overdraft. Boy seems to have been a wastrel. He's gone through a fortune."

Jamie looked at the checks as though trying to read something in the scrawling signature. "Where did the Harvells get their money?"

"Their father left it to them, I believe. Self-made man. It was a very considerable estate. Joe put his share into his hotel. What's all that got to do with the disappearance?"

Jamie placed the checks back on the Commissioner's desk. He didn't answer the question. "Cashed in Torbay, I see. Is the signature on the checks genuine?"

The Commissioner peered at the checks and then at Jamie. "Joe Harvell and the banker both think so. Joe authorized the banker to honor the second, overdraft check. Made the amount up himself. He's afraid that Boy's been kidnapped, and doesn't want him murdered because of non-payment of a check." He couldn't endure the suspense any longer. "What do you think, Jarvis?"

"I think this is it, sir. Will you arrange for me to meet Joe Harvell?

I want to get a line on some of Boy's odd pals."

The Commissioner shot him a look of pure dislike. He never did get anything out of Jamie until the latter was ready to wind up his case. He picked up the telephone and put through a call to Joe Harvell's hotel.

That evening, Jamie sat across a large table from his host in the luxurious dining-room of the Mayfair-Royale. In all the scene of subdued elegance, Joe Harvell struck the only incongruous note. He seemed ill-at-ease in his dinner jacket; his face had the hard shrewdness of a man who has had to fight for his success. Evidently the self-made father had trained at least his older son to do likewise. Jamie glanced around the table. Eight places were set. Joe caught the glance and looked nervously at his watch.

"I *told* them all eight o'clock! What if none of them show? Will that mean they're guilty?"

Jamie was quietly reassuring. "Probably not. From what you've told me of Boy's friends, they may think it's amusing to be late."

Joe cracked his knuckles. "They aren't going to come—"

Jamie was rising. He had seen two people approaching from behind Joe. "Here's the first lot!"

Joe greeted the newcomers. A young man and a pretty girl, they were dressed in extreme style with what Jamie privately felt was rather poor taste. The young man had a high-pitched voice; he performed the introductions.

"This creature is Googie Darling —" he waved at the girl.

"Is that a name or a description?" asked Jamie.

The girl giggled. "Isn't he a charming pet? Really too good-looking. Do you suppose he has any money, Sinjun?" This spoken in a loud, clear voice, was evidently expected to disconcert Jamie. The latter replied with complete self-possession,

"Matter of fact, I do have rather a lot. Are you selling something?"

The young man brayed with laughter. Googie recovered quickly. "At the moment, my pet, just charm.—Do shut up, Sinjun. You don't have to sing for your supper. Or does he, Mr. Harvell?"

Joe, recalled to his hostly duties, held Googie's chair for her. A waiter began to serve unobtrusively. Sinjun had been studying Jamie insolently. Now he addressed Joe.

"Has this boyhood chum of your brother's got a name?"

Flustered, Joe stammered out introductions. "This is James Jarvis—Mr. St. John ffolliot, Miss Googie Darling . . . I thought . . . that is, Mr. Jarvis has just come over to England from Canada . . ."

"Remittance man?" asked Sinjun nastily.

"Don't be beastly to the boyhood chum," Googie chided him. "You

may want to borrow money from him." She smiled at Jamie and held out an unlit cigarette. Jamie lighted it with a jewelled lighter that was something rather vulgar even in the jewelled lighter line. The Commissioner had provided it as a convincing indication of "the Canadian's" wealth. Googie's eyes widened. She leaned forward. "Gold mines? Timber? *Uranium?*"

"Fish," Jamie said, solemnly. "I train them to swim upstream. Goes very big in the Colonies."

Sinjun and Googie acknowledged a kindred spirit with wry smiles. They fell upon the superb cuisine Joe had provided, hardly bothering to include their host in their waspish chatter. Joe kept watching Jamie hopefully, but the latter made no effort to act like a detective. Finally, in desperation, Joe said, "James was hoping to interest Boy in a trip . . ." He glared at Jamie meaningly.

"South America, Siam, 'round the world," the latter supplied, obligingly.

Joe went on doggedly, "Boy's gone off somewhere. I'd hoped you two might know where he is—"

Sinjun rose abruptly. "Merry's party—we've completely forgotten it!"

Googie, halfway through a very good sweet, rose reluctantly. "Sorry, chicks. We must fly. Do ask us again sometime."

"See you around," Sinjun nodded to Jamie.

They departed.

Joe hardly waited for them to quit the dining-room. "What the devil's the matter with you, Jarvis? You didn't ask them a single question! My brother—"

"Your brother's life may depend upon our not warning them of our suspicions. If they are connected with The Brotherhood, they probably won't admit it till they've checked on me. Did you plant the information?"

"I've spread the rich-playboy-from-Canada story to the staff. They'll get plenty of confirmation if they check with any of my people. Why didn't you ask—"

"Because," explained Jamie patiently, "I don't want to be told any lies. I'll go to my room, now, so that they can get in contact with me if they are members of The Brotherhood. Why don't you get some rest? You're under so much pressure it's beginning to show."

Joe stared at him solemnly. "Have you a gun?"

They walked toward the elevators.

Jamie answered quietly, "Never carry one. I have my own methods." He kept silent until the elevator doors had closed behind them on Jamie's floor. Then, as they were walking down the hallway, "I must warn you, keep no watch of any kind on me. These people are too smart to be taken in by clumsy disguises, and a spy of any kind would tip them off. Good night, now."

Joe lingered wistfully as Jamie opened the door of his suite. "You won't tell me your plans—?"

Jamie shook his head, smiled gently, and closed the door. He walked quickly across the sitting room to the bedroom, inspected it and the bathroom carefully. Then he returned to the bedroom and hung up his dinner jacket. There was a knock on the hall door. Jamie slipped into the exotic silk dressing gown also supplied by the Commissioner, and went to open the door.

Googie and Sinjun swept past him, both talking at once. They were followed by a waiter wheeling a cart laden with food and bottles. Googie peeked into the bedroom.

"Just making sure that dreadful publican wasn't lurking offstage. Too grim, isn't he? We couldn't take any more of him, downstairs."

Sinjun was helping the waiter to fill the glasses. "The fellow positively curdled the cream. Let's have a drink! If you're a pal of Boy's we love you—as long as your money lasts,—but the brother we cannot take. Have a sandwich? We put them on your bill."

Googie and Sinjun left an hour later. Jamie stood in the centre of the room, frowning, reviewing the conversation, trying to recall any significant or questionable statement from among the continuous, idle-sounding chatter of Boy's friends. Were they the silly, sponging lightweights they appeared to be? Or had they, under the selfish, charming manner, been coldly appraising Jamie as a pigeon for future plucking? Jamie hoped very devoutly that was the case. So far, his temperamental abilities had been asleep, or reluctant, or out to lunch. He sighed. Possessing extrasensory perceptions which you could not control or manipulate, was like owning a roomful of tigers. Interesting but undependable, as pets. So far, in the absence of a direct lead from his subconcious, he could only hope that the kidnappers would make an overt move.

Jamie shrugged and went to telephone the Commissioner. The phone sat on a console table against the wall. While he waited for the call to be completed, Jamie stared at his own face in a huge, ornate mirror in front of him on the wall. The Commissioner's testy voice recalled him to duty.

"Yes, sir. Jarvis here. They've just left me. . . . No, they didn't mention the Brotherhood. They sound like complete featherweights, but perhaps that's the impression they're trying to make . . ." Jamie waited, while the telephone squawked at length. Then, "Yes, sir, I made a date with them for tomorrow. . . . No, not in Torbay. There's a New Wave movie they want to see . . ."

The ghost of a movement directly

in front of him caught Jamie's eye. In the ornate wall mirror was a reflection of the door to the hallway. Which door was opening, very slowly. Jamie raised his voice.

"Darling, of course I'll always love you! You didn't need to ask, did you? Toddle off to beddy-bye now, Sweetums, and dream of your Jimmy!"

As he gently cradled the phone on the outraged bellow of Commissioner Bryce-Leddinghill, Jamie found himself grinning in spite of the threat of that softly-opening door. He turned, being careful to make the movement slow and casual. The waiter who had wheeled in the cart earlier in the evening, entered, and without a word or a glance at Jamie, began to pick up the glasses and napkins and stack them on the cart.

There was a soundless stir deep within Jamie's mind. With tremendous relief, he recognized the awakening, indescribable but unmistakeable, of that special Awareness which constituted his supranormal abilities. He focused on the waiter. He was conscious of a closed mind, guarded, hostile. The depthless black eyes flicked up, as though aware of Jamie's scrutiny. Jamie assumed an idiotic smile, and became the very image of the bored, wealthy youth who has had too much to drink.

"It's just my money, you know, waiter. Not a blasted soul in the world really cares what becomes of me." He gestured toward the telephone. "That girl, now . . . if I lost my money, she'd drop me—" he tried unsuccessfully to snap his fingers—"like *that!*"

The sullen waiter had the cart loaded. He pushed it to the door and then turned and glanced at Jamie. A singularly unpleasant smile wreathed his thin lips. He went out and closed the door softly. Jamie waited, every sense alert. His inner Advisor was never mistaken, and it had signalled *danger*. After about thirty seconds, a white card appeared under the door. Jamie waited till it stopped moving, then walked slowly over to pick it up. He made no effort to open the door or find out who had pushed the card through. After a moment, when nothing more had happened, he turned the card over and read the message typewritten on it:

YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH BROTHER MACE AT THE ABBEY. TORBAY, SATURDAY.

Jamie drove up to the restored stone wall which cut across the peninsula and effectively kept the general public out of the Abbey grounds. He stopped the hired car and considered the locked iron gates. He was saved the gaucherie of blowing his horn by the appearance of a cowled figure on the other side of the gate. Jamie got out of

the car and presented his memo of appointment. The monk accepted it, silently, through the bars and scanned it carefully. Jamie sized him up. The robe and cowl were an effective disguise, but could not hide the lined, hard face and the muscular hands. The "monk" looked more like a man of violence than a devotee of meditation.

Wordlessly, the guardian unlocked the gates and motioned Jamie's car ahead. He drove through an uncared-for tangle of trees and shrubbery which formed, with the restored stone wall, an effective screen from all directions except the sky. The Abbey, when he came to it, was an unpleasant surprise. It had all the melodramatic features and gloomy discomforts of a ruined castle in a Gothic novel. Jamie had been expecting the chrome and glass modernity of the London cults, where pandering to secret lusts and fears is on a more discreet and comfortable level. The building itself, Jamie had learned from Chief Constable Mellin, had been the seat of a very old, uncouth family, who had wrenched the land and buildings from a religious establishment several hundred years before, and had fortified the peninsula and held it against all comers with a single-minded ferocity. With the coming of industrialization and less spacious times, tax collectors had accomplished what Church and State had been unable to do; the weakened and disgruntled remnants of the once-virile line had emigrated to Australia. The building had fallen into disrepair; it was too uncomfortable to live in and too primitive to be made habitable. It had existed as a sort of local monument, disreputable but colorful, like the town drunkard, rearing its broken towers on the cliff above Torbay.

Then The Brotherhood of Darkness had purchased it for a song from the Town Council, who were surprised and pleased to collect any money from a structure long since written off as a total loss. The Brotherhood had moved in very little furniture; it was obvious that they and their converts must be living under conditions of monastic severity in the ruined building. Curious loungers outside the wall reported the sounds of hammering on metal, but no unauthorized visitors had been able to get a glimpse of the premises.

A turn in the driveway brought Jamie face to face with the Abbey. Its snaggle-tooth towers reared menacingly above him, its narrow window embrasures frowned down like the slitted pupils of a giant cat. Jamie parked in a gravelled space before the building and went up to the iron-bound oak door. Though the day was sunny, once he entered the shadow of the building such a chill invaded his mind that he hesitated in the act of raising his hand to the corroded knocker. Gooseflesh prickled over his body.

Vainly he tried to penetrate the ancient stone walls with his mind, searching for some key to the mystery within. The powers within Jamie's mind were stubbornly unresponsive. He could not compel them to work at his direction; he could only wait until they decided to function. Straightening his shoulders, he laid his hand upon the knocker.

The door moved inward away from him with a silent life which sent primitive alarm prickling along Jamie's nerves. In the dark opening thus revealed, another cowled figure stood aside silently, motioning Jamie into the building. Jamie could distinguish only the gleam of eyes in the shadowed face in the hood. He entered, and felt the stirring of dead air as the massive door swung shut behind him. The place reeked of what Jamie supposed the cult-members would regard as the smell of history—aged damp stone, rotting wood and leather, rusted metal and bad drains. The monk glided ahead of him over the worn stone. What light there was came through the dusty, rough-glazed window slits. The great central hall held a few huge, rough, refectory tables and benches. The dirty stone walls were bare of ornament or drape. From the roof, lost in the shadows, dangled a huge and ancient broadsword. It hung above the center of the room, and beneath it was a single throne-like chair. Jamie realized that the knocker outside the door had been the representation of a sword, fastened hilt down, point up. The sword seemed to be a recurring motif in the Brotherhood's decorating. As he moved after his guide into a broad, gloomy passageway, Jamie hoped that the neophytes of the Brotherhood would not have to sit in the chair beneath the sword.

At the end of the passageway, a torch burned smokily in a wall sconce. The monk rapped on a heavy wooden door. It swung open. The sudden blaze of sunlight blinded Jamie. The whole seaward wall of the large room seemed to be made of glass. Large colored glass fishnet-floats hung in the sunlight, reflecting dazzling spears of light as they swung gently in the salt breeze from the open glass panels. Seated at a massive desk with his back to the glare was a short dumpy figure in a white robe. The cowl was tossed back to reveal a bald head. Brother Mace smiled greasily.

"You are welcome here, my son," he said unctiously, "whether you have come to learn or to scoff."

Jamie's eyes were watering uncontrollably from the glare. The flashes of colored light seemed to pierce his eyes like splinters of glass. The figure of the fat man blurred and sharpened. Jamie realized that the room was a giant machine built to confuse and hypnotize anyone who entered and faced the desk. He lowered his lids and stared

downward, at the floor. Assuming the half-eager, half-embarrassed attitude of the bored and wealthy playboy he was supposed to be, he muttered with a sheepish laugh,

"I've come to learn . . . I guess."

Mace's grin creased his oily face. "Who has recommended our discipline to you, my son?"

Jamie shook his head as though to clear it. "Boy . . . Boy Harvell . . ."

The flashing lights were insistent against Jamie's eyelids, forcing them closed, confusing and disorienting his mental powers. Mace's voice came to him faintly, through a distant roaring like the angry surf that pounded hungrily at the base of the cliff.

"Boy Harvell?" the voice mocked. "But you couldn't have spoken to him. Don't you mean Commissioner Bryce-Leddinghill of New Scotland Yard? Isn't he the one who sent you here, Detective Inspector James Jarvis?"

Jamie's voice was dull. He spoke as though the words were being dragged out of him. "Yes . . . the Commissioner sent me . . . to find Joe Harvell's brother . . . if he is . . . still . . . alive . . ."

Mace laughed. "Oh, yes, Detective Inspector Jarvis. Boy Harvell is still alive. And I'm going to send you to him—"

Something hit Jamie on the head, and he sank to the floor. The man who had conducted him to Mace's office put the cosh back in a pocket beneath his monk's costume. Mace pulled a curtain across the dazzling windows. He waddled over to stand above Jamie.

"Will you take our guest to the place where we have young Harvell, Cosher? The same accommodation, I think." He clasped his pudgy fingers in a mockery of prayer. "Let them enjoy the communion of Darkness together—no food, no water—until it is time for them to face the Judgment of the Sword."

Cosher grunted, stooped and shifted Jamie's body to his shoulder. He looked sullenly at Mace. "Hope you know w'ot yer doin'. Muckin' about wiv Scotland Yard."

Mace ignored this. He was trembling with queer elation. "Has Lippy disposed of the officer's car?"

"Goin' to run it off the cliffs tonight, twenty miles the other side of Torbay. He'll need the rozzer's overcoat and hat."

"Take them, Cosher. They will be our novice's first contribution to the Brotherhood." His voice rose shrilly. "Oh, but he is going to give us more, much more, before we are done with him!"

With a grunt, Cosher carried Jamie's inert body out of the room. Mace's high-pitched giggle followed them.

Jamie opened his eyes in darkness. There was a choking sensation of close, airless confinement. He was crouching on a stone floor. He brought one hand up to his

head, and discovered that there was a wide leather collar locked around his neck. A short length of chain, fastened at the back of the collar, was bolted into the stone wall behind him. His searching hand touched something cold and clammy that moved away with a startled hiss. Jamie recoiled instinctively and tried to jump to his feet. The length of chain which held him to the wall was too short; it jerked him back to his knees. In spite of the fetid chill of his prison, sweat broke out over his body. Muscles taut, he tried to pierce the enigmatic dark with every sense straining.

After an endless moment, there was a shuffling sound near him, followed by a whimper. *"Water, please . . ."* came a whisper.

Jamie relaxed. He crawled forward to the extent of his chain and stretched out a pitying hand. "Is it Boy Harvell?"

"Yes! Yes, I'm Harvell—have you come to help me?"

Jamie smiled grimly in the dark. "That was the general idea, but Brother Mace had different plans." His searching hands found the shoulder of the young man. The flesh was ice-cold. Jamie struggled out of his jacket and managed to get it on to Boy. He was trying to force the chain off Boy's leather collar without strangling him, when a door almost in front of his face creaked open. Jamie peered up, dazzled by the light. Two hooded figures stood in the opening, lighted by the pulsing glow of a smoking torch. The scene was something out of a grotesque medieval nightmare —the tiny stone cell, the neck-chained prisoners, the cowled, faceless inquisitors lit by the smokey red glare of a torch—but that same torch reflected from the nickel-plating of a pistol held by the smaller of the pseudo-monks. The other guard bent to unlock the neck-chains, keeping well out of the line of fire as he did so. These, decided Jamie, were not amateurs playing at crime, but wary professionals. And that meant money at stake, a great deal of it, and a shrewd and ruthless mind to direct their efforts. Brother Mace?

Jamie relaxed and let the unarmed guard pull him to his feet. He had not planned any course of action, hoping that those inner resources, over which he could not exercise direct control, would guide him to the proper action at the appropriate time. This did not mean, however, that he would pass up any chance, however slight, to attack the guards if they relaxed their vigilance for a second.

The big guard was trying to pull Boy to his feet, but he was too weak to stand. The guard struck him a smashing blow in the face. Jamie shouldered him aside and stooped to pick up the dazed youth. The big guard swore viciously, but his armed companion snapped out a single sharp word of command.

Hustling Jamie roughly ahead, the guards proceeded down a damp stone corridor. Boy was a complete dead weight across Jamie's shoulder, and he staggered as the corridor ended in a narrow stairway leading upward. The hooded figure jabbed the gun viciously into Jamie's back, and he began to mount, pressing against the rough stone wall with his free hand. Sweat ran into his eyes; Boy's inert body seemed to grow heavier as the stairs wound interminably up. Jamie thought that they must now be climbing inside the broken tower. Then the stone under his feet leveled off, and he stood, gasping, on a square landing. The big guard pulled Boy roughly from Jamie's shoulder and began to tie his hands behind him. He gagged him with a wide strip of adhesive tape and hobbled his ankles with a short piece of chain. Under the watchful eye of the hooded gunman, he did the same to Jamie. And then, with cold fury, knocked him down.

"You blasted fool," snapped the monk with the gun. "They have to be able to stand up, in there."

"Dirty rotten rozzer," growled the big guard. "I'll teach 'im to come snoopin' where 'e ain't wanted!"

The other shrugged and opened a heavily-ironed door at one side of the landing. Then the two guards thrust Jamie and Boy through the doorway and into a blood-red haze of light. The big guard held an arm of each of them, while the guard with the gun stayed watchfully in the shadows near the door. Jamie peered around. They stood on a platform without railing of any kind, which jutted out above a dark, open space. Behind him, on either side of the door by which they had entered, Jamie saw two of the smoking torches which Brother Mace used to create the atmosphere of the Abbey. But concealed at either end of the platform were two red-lensed spotlights, which highlighted anyone who stood there as though he were on the stage of a theatre. And there, at the very edge of the platform, his white robes dyed blood-scarlet by the concealed lights, stood Brother Mace, his fat face for once quite empty of its greasy smile. And Jamie knew that, in the next few minutes, not only his own life but that of Boy Harvell would depend on whether he could rouse the powers that slept below the conscious levels of his mind.

Brother Mace lifted his arm. The pseudo-monks brought Boy and Jamie forward to the very edge of the platform, a few feet from Mace. Jamie peered out and down into the darkness. He was suddenly aware of the hushed breathing and furtive movement of many bodies. The whole area below the platform was full of people! Then, as his eyes became accustomed to the ominous red light, he saw something which made his blood run

cold in his veins. About four feet below the platform, and about three feet out from it, the ruddy light caught and glittered on a sharp-pointed, razor-edged metal shaft. Following its outline, Jamie discovered that it was in the likeness of a giant sword, the hilt secured somewhere in the dark space many feet below the platform. Back to his unwilling memory came the words which Brother Mace had spoken in the room of the colored, hypnotic lights: ". . . let them enjoy the communion of Darkness together—*until it is time for them to face the Judgment of the Sword . . .*"

Jamie had assumed that the throne-like chair in the refectory, with the sword dangling high above it, was the threat behind that statement. He had supposed that the victim would be strapped into the Damoclean chair until his nerve broke and he signed a ransom check. His flesh cringed at the hideous promise of this more terrible sharpened metal stake. The man who had been found in the surf at the base of the Abbey cliffs—"smashed up something awful," to quote Chief Constable Mellin—had his living body been impaled upon that sword before he was thrown into the sea?

Brother Mace, both arms lifted, had turned to face the whispering darkness beneath the platform. There was a swelling murmur of response.

"My brothers! My sisters!" chanted Brother Mace in a harsh high voice, "Here are two who spy upon our Mysteries! Two Unbelievers who have come to mock us! I bring them before the Brotherhood of Darkness for judgment. Brothers, what is your decison?"

There was a many-voiced roar, appalling in its sheer animal savagery. It formed itself into words: *"The Sword! Let them be brought to the Judgment of the Sword!"*

Mace crossed his arms on his breast and bowed his head in a mockery of humility. "So be it! Yet first must one of us, a truly Blameless One, offer himself in like judgment, that the Law may be fulfilled against us, if we have erred in this decision!"

There was an indrawn breath of awe and fear from the unseen crowd below. Mace stepped back a few paces, crying out as he did, "Close your eyes; let all the Brotherhood of Darkness offer themselves to Darkness, and therein let each one WILL that I shall name an acceptable Blameless One!"

Even as he was speaking, he was outside the view of any Brother rash enough to have his eyes open at this crucial point. The platform hid him from their sight. One of the guards hurried forward, with something in his hands which glinted and caught the light. Jamie saw that it was a wire, like those used by circus or stage aerialists. The guard fastened it to a harness

concealed beneath Brother Mace's ample robes. The other end, lost in the smoky shadows above, was probably fastened to a stout beam, Jamie decided. It took no exercise of super-normal perception to see what Mace intended to do. He would cast himself from the platform, and be saved from impalement by the strong, yet invisible, wire. Having thus demonstrated the purity of his motives and the correctness of the judgment against Jamie and Boy, Brother Mace would then give the order—

These thoughts were interrupted by a stir of activity on the platform. Brother Mace had stepped back to the front edge of the platform. His voice rang out.

"My brothers! My sisters! I offer myself to the Judgment of the Sword!" To the accompaniment of a wordless groan from the watchers below, Mace threw his arms wide and fell forward toward the redly-glittering point of the Sword. At the back of the platform, the guard reeled up the wire; Brother Mace's fat little body swayed, halted a foot above the wicked metal, then rose and hovered above the platform, coming down with a jar. It was not the smoothest of performances, yet in that dim red light, to the fanatic watchers below, it must have seemed a miracle of levitation. Jamie had heard that same "A-a-ah!" of mingled astonishment and delight from a crowd watching a display of fireworks. Brother Mace held up his hand for silence. When he got it, he shouted, "And now we will put the spies to the Judgment of the Sword!"

He nodded to one of the guards, and jerked a thumb at Boy Harvell, who was slumped against the wall near the door. The guard jerked him to his feet, but, dazed and weakened by his long imprisonment in the tiny cell, Boy could not stand. He staggered against the burly guard, who bent and caught him under his knees and shoulders. The guard glanced at Brother Mace, received a nod, and carried Boy to the edge of the platform.

Sweat broke out on Jamie's body. They couldn't actually be going to condemn that helpless kid to the long, writhing agony of death on the spike? His frantic eyes sought Brother Mace. That creature was bent forward, fat face shining with greedy interest in the sight to come.

"It's like Hell," thought Jamie. The smoke-filled cavern, the darkness made more menacing by the fitful glare of the torches. The hooded figures, voiceless, faceless, utterly without scruple or pity,—surely Hell itself could hold no devils more sadistic? Jamie sent out a wordless, desperate appeal to those mysterious powers that existed deep within his mind, powers which occasionally aroused themselves and functioned as super-normal abilities, but never at his conscious bidding nor under his direct control.

There was no response.

Slowly the guard lifted Boy's inert body, whetting the avid appetites of the crowd below; Jamie knew he couldn't hold that dead weight long. He'd have to toss it down upon the spike. As though the urgency of the situation had reached his dazed mind, Boy began to struggle and twist. The guard, afraid he himself might slip from the edge of the platform, threw Boy's body onto the Sword.

Jamie said, *"This shall not be."*

No word was spoken—the wide adhesive taped across his face prevented any outcry. His hands were bound cruelly tight behind him, his ankles hobbled by short chains. He had never been so completely helpless, physically, in his life. Only his eyes and his mind were free. But the real Jamie, the decent, honest goodness that was Jamie's inner Essence, spoke to those sleeping powers which had so far ignored his every appeal and summons. "This shall not be," said Jamie, very quietly in his mind; and the powers heard him, and obeyed.

Boy's body was falling onto the Sword. Jamie's mind reached out through his eyes, through the exercise of seeing, and touched Boy's body. The power functioned.

Boy stopped falling.

Holding the body, cradling it with his vision, Jamie lifted it from the very point of the Sword and brought it back up to the platform. He set it down gently. From below came a clamor of voices. Mace was glaring open-mouthed, his face a mask of shock; he was rooted to the spot. The big guard turned and ran through the doorway. But the hooded figure with the gun, forgotten in the shadows, darted forward like a striking snake and pushed Jamie off the platform.

He fell sideways toward the spike. Screams rang out below as the Brothers, thoroughly confused and frightened by the levitation of a bound and helpless victim, scattered, each one fearing that he would be crushed under this second falling body.

Jamie felt a sort of indifference to his own plight. Almost idly, he thought of returning to the platform. It was not an effort of will, not even a command to his inner powers such as had resulted in the saving of Boy. It was as though a thought passed through his mind that it would be comfortable to be standing on the platform instead of falling . . . *and he was.* Instantly, without moving back through the space between. And the adhesive tape and the bonds and the chain were gone.

This teleportation completed the disintegration of the Brotherhood. Those who had refused to give in to superstitious panic when Jamie levitated Boy, broke and ran when Jamie, falling, did not fall. The hooded gunman had disappeared immediately after he pushed Jamie from the platform. Now Brother Mace ran out the door after him;

Jamie heard him clattering down the stair. In the distance, doors banged, cars started, men shouted at one another. But on the platform Jamie stood very quietly above Boy's body. In his eyes there was a great stillness.

Some of that quiet certainty still lingered in Jamie's eyes the next morning, as he faced Commissioner Bryce-Leddinghill in Boy Harvell's bedroom. Boy, looking at once young and haggard, was lying in bed drinking a glass of milk. Jamie sat near him. The Commissioner was pacing up and down, frowning horridly as he tried to pry some further details from Jamie. Boy looked up with a grin.

"I'm not sure what Jarvis did, Commissioner, but it must have been terrific. I wasn't receiving the whole picture—bit of a wash-out after those days in the Black Hole—but I know he routed the whole mob single-handed."

The Commissioner was torn between wanting to know and fear of finding out that it was some more of what he called 'mumbo-jumbo'. "Well, what *did* you do, Jarvis?"

"I was lucky enough to get a grip on Harvell as he went over the edge, sir."

Boy was dissatisfied. "That doesn't explain the way those people acted."

The Commissioner was relieved that he didn't have to hear about any super-normal capers. "Hysterical types, those cultists. Hypnotize themselves into believing anything."

Joe Harvell came into the room, nodded to the Commissioner and Jamie, and stood protectively over Boy's bed. "Are you feeling fit, Boy?"

Boy grinned up at him. "Even better than I was half an hour ago, when you asked me."

"You had us all worried." Joe turned to the Commissioner. "What's being down about Brother Mace and his henchmen? I want them arrested! Surely you've got enough evidence to put them behind bars?"

Bryce-Leddinghill didn't like to be pushed. "I'm afraid the two chief rascals have eluded us so far." he said stiffly. "Chief Constable Mellin has rounded up several of the—er, disciples—a poor lot! Silly young thrill seekers" (he glanced sternly at Boy, who grinned unrepentantly and sucked noisily at the last drops of milk with his straw). "Then there was the usual sprinkling of frustrated spinsters and retired business men looking for something to fill their empty lives. When we informed them that they had been accessories before and after the fact of murder, they were willing enough to talk." He took out his pipe and began to fill it. "Trouble is, they don't know anything."

"You mean those fiends are going to get off scot-free?"

"We have a tracer out on the waiter," the Commissioner said.

"When we catch him, we'll find out who employed him. Someone gave him that note he gave Jamie."

Joe frowned. "But I thought Brother Mace was the head man?"

"We aren't sure of that. He's a nasty little sadist, but we can't prove murder on him. There's a warrant out for the man who tried to murder Inspector Jarvis,—the one who carried a gun."

There was a discreet knock at the door. Joe called, "Come in!" and the door opened to reveal Sergeant Percival Todd. Ahead of him he shepherded Googie Darling and Sinjun ffolliot, after the manner of a good grey sheep-dog chivvying a pair of frisky black lambs.

"I located them for you, sir," he reported to the Commissioner, but his eyes sought out Jamie to be sure no serious harm had come to him as a result of his adventure with the Brotherhood.

Googie and Sinjun rushed over to Boy's bedside, elbowing Joe aside from his place. He came over to Jamie, making elaborate faces and gestures to indicate that he suspected the new arrivals. Jamie stared speculatively at them.

The phone rang, and Joe bustled over to answer it. He held out the receiver to the Commissioner.

"Bryce-Leddinghill here . . . yes, that's the one. You're sure? Too bad! Yes, I shall let them know. Right. Carry on." He faced Joe. "That was the Yard. They've just fished your waiter out of the Thames. Dead at least two days."

"There goes your last lead!" Joe's voice rose hysterically. "You'll never find those two murderers! You won't be able to prove anything!"

The Commissioner glanced angrily across at Jamie. Dammit, his look seemed to say, why don't you produce one of those trick solutions of yours? "Gently, Mr. Harvell. We'll get the men."

"You're sure they were men?" asked Joe. "Jarvis said the monk with the gun had a hood over his head. And a loose, full robe. It could have been a woman!" He glared at Googie.

Boy had been following this. Now he hooted with laugher. "Are you completely around the bend? Googie hasn't the brains for a caper like this. And can you picture her carrying me about in her arms?"

"It hardly seems possible," agreed the Commissioner. "Can you furnish us with an account of your whereabouts yesterday, Miss—Miss—?"

Googie came over to him. "Darling. But you may call me Googie, Commissioner."

The Commissioner looked as though he found one name as repulsive as the other. "Miss—er—Darling, where were you yesterday?"

"At the foreign language cinema with Sinjun. A New Wave pic'—too devastating! Sinjun'll vouch for me."

"And who'll vouch for him?

You?" sneered Joe. "Commissioner, that's not good enough!"

The Commissioner was becoming annoyed. His white mustache and eyebrows began to bristle. He blamed Jamie for not getting him out of this; where were those blasted tricks Chalfont was always boasting about? "Mr. Harvell," he said coldly, "you may safely leave this to us." He decided to force a showdown. "Jarvis, is this young woman one of the cowled monks?"

"No, she is not, sir." Jamie didn't amplify the simple statement. Joe pointed at Sinjun.

"Is it him?"

The Commissioner ignored him. "How can you be sure it isn't the girl?"

"Because I know who is the real head of the Brotherhood."

Joe leaned forward tensely. "You've got proof?"

"I can get it," answered Jamie quietly.

Joe turned away with a shrug of disappointment. Jamie went on quietly. "Since I have been in this room, I have been—listening. Not to your voices. They can lie. But to your minds. What you are thinking, you cannot conceal from me."

Joe, angry and incredulous, sneered, "You're going to base your 'proof' on some mind-reading act? They'll throw the case out of court!"

Jamie looked around at the various people in the room. "I'm going to build my case on a very concrete piece of evidence." He pointed to the floor in the centre of the room. A crumpled robe with a cowl appeared on the immaculate carpet. It was dripping wet and smelled as though it had just been pulled out of the sea. "If the robe fits you, *wear it!*" said Jamie sternly. While everyone stared, the robe began to move. As though instinct with horrid life, it twitched across the carpet . . . toward Joe Harvell. With a squawk of pure superstitious terror Joe broke and ran toward the door. As he turned, the robe faded from the floor and reappeared on his body. Sinjun put out a foot and tripped the fleeing man, who went down in a tangle of wet cloth. Joe tore at the clinging robe as though it had loathesome life. He twisted his head to look at Jamie.

"You devil! How did you know it was me?"

"You told me," said Jamie steadily. Boy Harvell was staring at his brother in horror; he turned his face away with a half-sob. Googie felt for his hand and held it.

Joe was whimpering on the floor. "First the levitation . . . and now this . . . get it off me, Jarvis . . . *get it off!*"

Discomfort at another of Jamie's tricks faded from the Commissioner's face as he realized the case was solved. He could trust Jamie to document the proof arrived at in so unorthodox a manner. He always did. The wretched chap making

such a poor show on the floor would probably confess. . . .

Jamie was looking at Joe. "You couldn't bear to see Boy throwing away your father's money, when you needed it so desperately to keep the hotel going, so you had him kidnapped and taken to the Abbey—"

"I didn't hurt him—or you. You're both all right, aren't you? You can't pin anything on me!"

"The waiter you sent to my room, and those two men you let Mace impale. You'll hang for those, Mr. Harvell," said Jamie, sternly. "You would have been better advised to stick with your legitimate hotel business, instead of exploiting the Brotherhood cult."

Joe had finally succeeded in getting out of the robe. Sergeant Todd took him by the arm, and gave him the usual caution. Joe ignored him, and kept his white, damned face turned to Jamie.

"How did you do it, Jarvis? What kind of a man are you?" he whispered.

But Jamie didn't answer.

AGAIN AN EDITORIAL ASIDE

Senator Thomas J. Dodd's call, in an address before the New York City Police Department's Holy Name Society in April of this year for a return to saneness in facing the threat to our survival that the moral breakdown among our youth represents, should be applauded by the many among us who are concerned at the spread of this sickness, this disease, which has become a part of our times.

Calling for a recasting of society's basic institutions "in order to preserve those human qualities which freedom itself cannot survive," Senator Dodd then went on to discuss a problem of special interest to the men to whom he was talking.

"The attack of free society on this problem must be of two kinds. Against the criminal who is already on the streets we must intensify all of our police efforts. And to guard against the future tidal wave of crime and degeneracy toward which we are tending, free society must rebuild its faltering institutions.

We must stop handcuffing the police by forcing them to handle all young criminals as though they were merely juvenile delinquents. We must stop forcing the police to handle with kid gloves the vicious hoodlum who deliberately takes advantage of his juvenile status. We must, by beefing up the physical resources of our police department, and tightening the laws under which they operate, give our policemen the tools to make these criminals feel the full weight of restrictive law enforcement."

H. S. S.

terror in tivoli

by . . . Harry Harrison

"A GREAT LUNCH, Captain Nielsen, Tivoli is everything you said it would be."

"May the rest of your stay in Copenhagen be just as pleasurable, Captain Miles—Skol!"

Both policemen raised their glasses of akvavit in a friendly toast. Sunlight spangled their table, shining through the leaves of the trees above. In the background was the pleasant murmur of many voices, laughter, excited shrieks from the riders on the rumbling roller-coaster. A band, dimly heard in the distance was playing a Strauss waltz. It was warm and pleasant.

The scream sliced through the air like a slashing knife, destroying the tranquil fabric in an instant. It was piercing, throbbing, the sound of a woman in terror.

Captain Nielsen's chair went down with a clatter as he sprang to his feet. The open-air restaurant was close to the ferris wheel, and he was one of the first people to get there. As he ran he was aware that the American policeman was close behind him. His heavy shoes

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Harry Harrison, who has appeared previously in this magazine, is the author of DEATH WORLD and the recent PLANET OF THE DAMNED (both Bantam*) and THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT (Pyramid). The author, who has been living in Denmark, here describes the "voices, laughter, excited shrieks" which have meant Tivoli.*

thudded on the wooden platform as he pushed through the gathering crowd. The woman who had screamed still stood before the open door of the ferris wheel carriage, her mouth open and shaped yet by her horrified cry.

The two policemen looked at the man slumped into the corner of the carriage, the blood that stained his coat, the handle of the knife that projected from his back.

It was routine for Captain Nielsen to cordon off the area, have the witnesses watched by the policemen who quickly arrived, and make things just as orderly as is possible when a dead man is concerned. He even remembered that there were people in the other carriages and, after making sure that the huddled form was really dead, he had the ferris wheel started once more. The tall attendant went silently about his job. The next carriage had no occupants, but the others were full. One by one the suddenly grim merrymakers climbed down and left, until once more the carriage with the dead man was in front of the Captain.

There was no way to avoid the need to begin an investigation. With a silent groan Nielsen wished that he could withdraw the words he had spoken during luncheon. Though Miles was from the United States, the two men had much in common. Both were policemen, both were detectives, both were captains. Both made a specialty of homicide. When the New York policeman had asked the Copenhagen policeman about murder investigation methods, he had been rash enough to answer in detail. With more than a little pride he had told how few cases of homicide they had, but how quickly these few were solved and the matter settled. Captain Miles had been almost jealous, wishing that things could go that smoothly for him.

At no time while he was talking, had Captain Nielsen expected to have been put to the test so quickly. As he leaned forward to look at the body he was painfully aware of the American policeman standing close behind him.

"I'm not going to move anything until the photographers and fingerprint men have arrived, but perhaps we can find out the identity of the unfortunate man." As he said this, Captain Nielsen draped a handkerchief over his fingers and probed delicately inside the dead man's breast pocket. Careful not to blur any fingerprints on it, he drew out the thin form of a passport.

"West German," Captain Miles said, standing on tiptoe to look over the tall Dane's shoulder. "Looks like you have an international incident on your hands as well as murder." Nielsen could only nod in unhappy agreement. He turned to the attendant who stood silently to one side.

"Can you speak English?" he asked. The man nodded. "Will you

please tell us then what you know."

The attendant had a thick accent, and there was little enough to tell. Both policemen listened intently. The dead man—Schultz—had been alone. If there had been anyone waiting for him the attendant had not noticed. Schultz had not seemed to be worried, or acted unnatural in any way. In fact he seemed to be enjoying himself. The attendant had taken his ticket, closed the gate and seen him whisked aloft. Alive. People came and went in the other carriages, the ferris wheel had turned, and roughly three minutes passed before the gate of the Schultz carriage had been opened again. The girl, waiting outside, had screamed. That was all he knew.

Sometime during those three minutes, high in the air, in full sight of everyone in the pleasure park, the man had been killed.

"It might have been suicide," Captain Miles said, chewing pensively on a dead cigar.

"I considered that," Nielsen told him, "but the chances seem very slim. In the first place, you will notice, the knife has been driven into the body for the full length of the blade. It strikes me as being impossible for a man to strike himself in the back with enough force to do that."

"True, true," Miles said. "But he might have wedged the knife into a crack and backed onto it."

"A possibility," Nielsen said politely, "but not a very big one. I can see nothing in the carriage that might have suited this purpose. Also—the knife is a pocketknife with a folding blade. It would be very hard to do without the blade folding back into the handle."

Miles nodded reluctant agreement. "Well—if he didn't kill himself—the knife might have been thrown from one of the other cars."

"I'm afraid two things rule that out," Nielsen said with deepening gloom. "Firstly, the carriage behind his was empty, we saw that for ourselves. And this is the only one with a clear view of Schultz's carriage. From the other ones the axle and machinery are in the way. And even if someone had been in the carriage, I doubt if it could have been done. Knife throwers use carefully weighted and balanced blades. I doubt if any one of them—no matter how skilled—could hurl a pocketknife over this distance with any kind of force. The knife is unstable, much heavier in the handle than the blade. An almost impossible thing to throw with any degree of accuracy."

Miles had his eyes half closed, squinting up at the webwork iron structure of the ferris wheel. "I don't suppose there were any mechanics working on the machinery or on the wheel during the time?" The attendant shook his head no.

"It is forbidden by safety rules," Nielsen said.

The New York policeman

brooded over this a minute, then began to count on his fingers.

"Firstly, he can't have committed suicide, that has been ruled out. Then he wasn't killed by a thrown knife, or by anyone on the wheel or after the cage stopped. Is that right?"

Nielsen nodded in grim agreement.

"Then we seem to have ruled out all the possibilities," Miles said. "The only possible conclusion I can reach is that he wasn't killed at all —but the body rules that one out. I am reluctantly forced to admit that I don't know how he was killed, and I'm very glad this is your department, Nielsen, not mine."

It was a bitter moment for Captain Nielsen. The visiting policeman—from a city twice as big as Nielsen's entire country—had admitted defeat. Could Nielsen do any better? Could he solve the murder—or would he just make a fool of himself? He made his mind up abruptly and turned to the uniformed policeman next to him and borrowed his handcuffs.

"I am arresting you for murder," he said, turning to the silent attendant. The man slowly extended his wrists and the cuffs clicked closed.

"His name was not Schultz," the attendant said, speaking Danish with the same thick accent, "it was Meise. He was a pig."

"Why did you do it?" Captain Nielsen asked.

"I recognized him when he climbed into the carriage, but he didn't know me. He was a sergeant in our concentration camp, an S.S. man. He killed my father, both my brothers. When I saw him I remembered everything and killed him. That was all." The attendant still stood quietly, his face unchanged by any expression.

"He is more a case for the hospital than the prison," Nielsen sighed as he watched the man being led away.

"But how did you *know?*" Captain Miles asked.

"I didn't," Captain Nielsen said calmly, "not for sure. But the fact that the carriage behind Schultz was empty gave me the idea. That meant that no one was waiting in line behind him and the attendant could have reached into the carriage and killed the man without being seen. This was the only possibility, no matter how illogical it seemed, so I acted upon it. I hoped my sudden action would get a confession—and my hopes were justified."

"I owe you an akvavit on that," the American said. "I must say you police here live up to your reputation."

"We try," the Dane said, waiting until the other's back was turned to wipe the tell-tale dampness from his forehead.

(Continued from other side)

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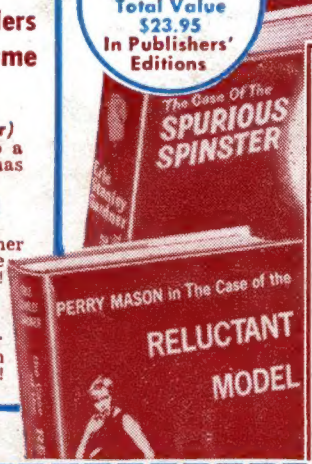

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